

## Introduction

Assessment is an essential part of the teaching and learning process. A good assessment framework raises the expectations of teachers and makes teachers aware of the potentially high standards that their pupils can achieve. It helps teachers to sharpen the focus on what is being taught and why. It enables them to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainments and to plan the next steps in their learning. It provides the means to chart progress, and makes pupils and their parents clear about particular achievements and targets for improvement.

Assessment should therefore enable pupil and teacher to recognise and celebrate achievement and should motivate the learner.

Effective assessment requires:

- ◆ identification of a clear focus for a unit or lesson;
- ◆ clear planning of objectives;
- ◆ careful consideration of learning experiences;
- ◆ opportunities to demonstrate achievement;
- ◆ regular evaluation.

The following types of assessment serve different purposes:

### **Formative Assessment**

The process of making regular judgments about what has been achieved, so that **pupils** can be informed of their progress and encouraged to take the next step.

### **Diagnostic Assessment**

The process of identifying what aspect of learning a pupil has mastered, so that **teachers** can plan for the future, deciding what aspects need attention.

### **Summative Assessment**

Takes place at the end of a course or unit of work and sums up the achievement of a pupil to that point.

### **Evaluation**

Involves judgments about the extent to which the learning experiences offered enable pupils to achieve the objectives. This will form the basis of regular planning reviews.

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## The Purpose of the Guidance

This guidance aims to support teachers and managers of RE and assessment in having effective whole school systems for assessing pupils' progress and achievement in relation to an Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education. Its purpose is two-fold.

It is intended to be an assessment system that is both manageable and useful for teachers, and raises pupils' achievement in RE.

## Assessment in the local and national context

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and Department for Education and Employment (DfES) jointly publish "Assessment and Reporting Arrangements" booklets for key stages 1, 2 and 3. These are updated annually and state that:

*"Schools are required to keep records on every child, including information on academic achievements, other skills and abilities and progress made in school. They must update these records at least once a year. There are no other requirements about how or in what form, records should be kept, and there are no other statutory requirements concerning record-keeping and the retention of evidence."*

Therefore, schools will need to ensure that, as a minimum, annual reports to parents include a statement about the pupil's progress and achievement in religious education, and that a copy of the annual report is retained within the pupil's file.

The assessment methods described in this guidance will enable teachers to write meaningful records that can inform discussions with parents and provide useful information for the pupil's next teacher and/or school. Any records retained will be the result of assessment through normal classroom activities which are purposeful for the pupils, rather than being a "bolt-on" to the taught curriculum.

The guidance also reflects the emphasis given to assessment in the OFSTED framework.

*The overriding principles are that assessment informs teachers' planning and teaching in order to challenge and support all pupils, and that systems are in place to ensure that pupils reach the necessary standards of attainment.*

In order to support teachers in judging attainment, the guidance is linked to the latest national guidance on standards in RE from QCA, an 8-level scale of attainment in Religious Education, which is published as part of QCA's "Non-statutory National Framework for RE (2004)" document.

The scale is based on two RE Attainment Targets that describe the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils are expected to have by the end of the key stage. The attainment targets consist of eight level descriptions of increasing difficulty, plus a description of exceptional performance above level 8. Each level description describes the type and range of performance that pupils working at that level should characteristically demonstrate.

The majority of pupils are expected to work at:

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- ◆ Levels 1-3 in Key Stage 1 and attain level 2 at the end of the Key Stage;
- ◆ Levels 2-5 in Key Stage 2 and attain level 4 at the end of the Key Stage;
- ◆ Levels 3-7 in Key Stage 3 and attain level 5/6 at the end of the Key Stage.

By indicating expectations at particular levels and by charting broad progression in the subject, the level descriptions can also inform planning, teaching and assessment

In summary, the approach to assessment described here is principally designed to:

- ◆ maximise the progress and achievement of all pupils;
- ◆ improve the quality of teaching and learning;
- ◆ inform and improve reports to parents;
- ◆ be manageable and effective for teachers in the classroom.

## Identifying opportunities for summative assessment

Each school's RE Scheme of work organises the appropriate content of the Agreed Syllabus into manageable units of work across the year groups of each key stage.

Children should be given credit for achievement whenever it is demonstrated, whether informally or through planned activities. Each unit of work will provide information about children's attainment. Any classroom activity can be seen as an assessment opportunity, though not necessarily for all pupils at the same time.

Therefore teachers will be frequently employing a range of formative and diagnostic assessment strategies throughout these units to ensure that the next steps of learning are pitched appropriately for each pupil.

Schools will also need to consider how often you intend to make Summative assessments linked to the 8-level scale. At a minimum this should be once annually, but could be organised termly or twice a year.

Having made the decision about how often you wish to make these assessments, you will need to examine the units of work that have been developed for each year group in order to plan activities that provide suitable opportunities for these assessments. Your selection will need to cover both attainment targets and enable you to make a judgement annually about the levels of attainment at which pupils are operating.

## Planning assessment opportunities

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The important principle to bear in mind is that assessment should be an integral part of planning and teaching, and should reflect pupils' achievements as they engage in their usual high quality activities.

Teachers will probably find that most activities lend themselves readily to assessment of the relevant objectives, whilst others may need some modification in order to provide sufficient evidence to make a judgement or to challenge pupils to achieve higher levels of attainment.

## Possible assessment strategies

Most teachers will have a repertoire of assessment strategies from which to select ones that are appropriate. These might include, for example:

- ◆ Listening to pupils: in either formal or informal settings, teachers can listen to pupils' questions, responses or presentations, all of which provide information about their depth of understanding, attitudes and ability to relate learning from one context to another;
- ◆ Questioning children: by asking pertinent questions to elicit pupils' conceptual understanding, teachers can gain more insight in order to make sound judgements;
- ◆ Involving pupils in assessment of their own learning: pupils play the most important part in their own learning. At the start of a unit of work, pupils can be encouraged to reflect on prior learning and use this as a baseline for charting their progress and achievement through the unit of work. Towards the end of the unit of work, pupils can reflect on their achievement and judge their progress in relation to their starting point. By doing this before the end of the unit the teacher still has opportunity to address any misconceptions that a pupil may have;
- ◆ Marking: if teachers have clear learning objectives that are shared with the pupils, then these form the focus for marking, whether it is written or pictorial work. The teacher's comments can praise success and indicate ways to improve.

Feedback to pupils, either oral or written, needs to be supportive and sensitive. It needs to affirm success and challenge a pupil to improve in a context of trust. If feedback is focused on clearly defined learning objectives, pupils are able to become involved in the learning process and take control of their own progress and achievement.

## Recordkeeping: gathering evidence over time

The most valuable forms of assessment will be those that provide useful information for pupils, teachers, head teachers or parents. Any evidence that is recorded needs to be both manageable to administer and inform the next steps in learning. With that in mind, the following

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systems of recordkeeping either are easily completed as part of pupils' on-going work or can consist of a brief summary by the teacher of observations made in relation to learning objectives.

## Class Achievement Record Sheet

The following Class Achievement Record Sheet is particularly useful for teachers at the end of a unit of work.

It can be prepared in advance by filling in the names of all the pupils in the class and can then be photocopied so that the teacher has multiple copies available. One Sheet can then be completed for a given unit of work.

In this record sheet the 'theme' is the title of the unit currently being taught. The 'task' is the activity that the teacher has planned and the levels relate to differentiated expectations for the class, describing what:

- a) most pupils will achieve;
- b) some pupils who have made less progress will achieve;
- c) some pupils who have progressed further will have also achieved.
- d) exceptional achievement.



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During on-going work or at the end of the unit, the teacher sets the activity which enables a judgement to be made in relation to the level at which each pupil is working. This is recorded by ticking or making a brief comment in the appropriate column. Indeed, teachers in secondary schools may use their mark book in this way.

Teachers should share objectives with their pupils wherever possible and give them feedback on their attainment.

Any variation in achievement across the Attainment Targets, either individual or class, should inform planning and target-setting.

The Class Achievement Record Sheet provides useful information not only for the class teacher, but also for the receiving teacher/s and subject manager; it also ensures that pupils' prior learning forms the basis of future work.

## ● Making judgements

You will arrive at judgements by taking into account strengths and weaknesses in performance across a range of contexts and over a period of time, rather than focusing on a single piece of work.

A single piece of work will not cover all the expectations set out in a level description. It will probably provide partial evidence of attainment in one or two aspects of a level description. If you look at it alongside other pieces of work covering a range of contexts you will be able to make a judgement about which level best fits a pupil's overall performance.

## Beginning and end of unit assessment

At the start (or before the start) of a new unit of work, it is invaluable for both teachers and pupils to be aware of what pupils already know and understand. In this way, pupils recognise when they are adding new learning to their existing knowledge and understanding; teachers are better informed of different pupils' starting points and can plan more effectively for every pupil. At the end of the unit both teacher and pupils are able to recognise and celebrate progress and achievement.

The following grids provide a simple format for pupils to record their knowledge and understanding both at the start and end of the unit of work.

These completed sheets provide an invaluable record of pupils' progress and achievement in that unit of work. However, although these provide useful evidence and enable teachers to make fuller judgments about the levels at which pupils are operating in RE this wealth of information may be too detailed for transferring either to the next related unit of work or to the next teacher.

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Before the unit this is what I know about....

At the end of the unit this is what I have learned.....

Name:

Name:

Date:

Date:



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## Pupil self-assessment

The involvement of pupils through reflection and self-evaluation is an essential part not only of good assessment practice but also of reaching a deeper understanding of religious education.

The following self-assessment frames are designed to fulfil both these objectives, and are particularly useful in providing evidence for Attainment Target 2. Short response sheets like these can help pupils to record their reflections and responses to experiences.

<p>We talked about.....</p>  <p>And at the end I thought...</p>
<p>We discussed.....</p>  <p>My opinion is.....</p>

At the end of the school year, the teacher can select from the range of evidence that exists, those pieces that provide the most useful evidence of achievement and progress for the next teacher. A class file may be set up for this purpose and could contain, for example:

- ◆ completed Class Achievement Record Sheets;
- ◆ representative samples of pupils' work illustrating the different levels of achievement;
- ◆ completed short response sheets
- ◆ indicative levels of attainment for each pupil.

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## Developing consistency; moderating assessment outcomes with colleagues

In order to develop whole school consistency and raise standards in RE, teachers can share with each other pupils' work and achievements. This process of agreement trialling enables teachers to have shared expectations of pupils' progress and achievement, and be more informed about the next steps in pupils' learning.

Examples of pupils' work at different levels can be kept in school to provide a portfolio of exemplification materials.

## Using the assessment information for reporting

### Reporting to parents

Schools are required to report annually to parents, including a brief comment on the child's progress in each subject and activity studied as part of the school curriculum, highlighting strengths and development needs. There should also be a comment on the child's general progress. The evidence collected from formative, diagnostic and summative aspects will provide the information needed for reporting.

In addition, some schools may consider reporting a level to parents at the end of key stage 2 and throughout key stage 3. This decision would be made in the context of the whole school policy on assessment and reporting.

### Transferring information

#### i. Within a school

In order to ensure continuity and progression for pupils, teachers will need to transfer key pieces of information about pupils' achievements in relation to the school's assessment scheme. This also provides a picture of the cohort's achievements in relation to national expectations. As a minimum, it is suggested that the following be transferred to the next teacher:

- copies of pupils' annual reports;
- the class file, including the assessment record sheets, examples of a range of pupils' work or other evidence, record of pupils' indicative levels of attainment.

#### ii. To the next school

##### Key Stage 1 to 2

If the whole cohort is transferring from the infant to the junior school, and curriculum and assessment planning has been shared between the two schools, then information can be transferred in the same way as (i) above. This will be in addition to information that must be transferred, namely each child's educational records and the key stage 1 statutory transfer form.

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If a pupil is transferring to a new school, separately from the remainder of the cohort, then as a minimum, the school will need to transfer all educational records relating to the child, plus the relevant statutory transfer form. In addition, any samples of RE work and an indicative level of attainment in RE (if used) would be useful.

## Key Stage 2 to 3

When a pupil is transferring to secondary school, it would be helpful if the school could transfer, alongside the key stage 2 statutory transfer form, an indicative level of attainment in RE based on assessment activities undertaken in the last year of Primary education. This information is in addition to all educational records relating to the child, which must also be transferred.

## Principles of Assessment

Assessment should:

- ◆ be an integral part of the learning process;
- ◆ be built into the planning of units of work;
- ◆ be based on clear learning objectives;
- ◆ be based on clear criteria which are shared with and understood by pupils wherever possible;
- ◆ arise out of the learning experiences the pupils have had during a particular unit of work;
- ◆ include open-ended tasks which allow pupils to respond at different levels;
- ◆ be differentiated as appropriate;
- ◆ allow children to show what they know, understand and can do;
- ◆ take account of different learning styles;
- ◆ be used to inform future planning;
- ◆ provide comparative data as a focus for school improvement.

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## The attainment targets and level descriptions

The attainment targets for religious education set out the knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils of different abilities and maturities are expected to have by the end of key stages 1, 2 and 3. As with the National Curriculum subjects, the attainment targets consist of eight level descriptions of increasing difficulty, plus a description for exceptional performance above level 8.

Each level description describes the types and range of performance that pupils working at that level should characteristically demonstrate. Apart from their summative use, these level descriptions can be used in assessment for learning.

The key indicators of attainment in religious education are contained in two attainment targets:

- Attainment target 1: Learning about religion
- Attainment target 2: Learning from religion.

**Learning about religion** includes enquiry into, and investigation of, the nature of religion. It focuses on beliefs, teachings and sources, practices and ways of life and forms of expression. It includes the skills of interpretation, analysis and explanation. Pupils learn to communicate their knowledge and understanding using specialist vocabulary. It includes identifying and developing an understanding of ultimate questions and ethical issues.

**Learning from religion** is concerned with developing pupils' reflection on, and response to, their own experiences and learning about religion. It develops pupils' skills of application, interpretation and evaluation of what they learn about religion, particularly questions of identity and belonging, meaning, purpose, truth, values and commitments, and communicating their responses.

The level descriptions provide the basis to make judgements about pupils' performance at the end of key stages 1, 2 and 3. In the foundation stage, children's attainment is assessed in relation to the early learning goals. At key stage 4, national qualifications are the main means of assessing attainment in religious education.

### **Range of levels within which the great majority of pupils are expected to work at the end of the key stages**

- Key stage 1 between levels 1–3 At age 7 the majority of [pupils will be working at level 2
- Key stage 2 between levels 2–5 At age 11 the majority of [pupils will be working at level 4
- Key stage 3 between levels 3–7 At age 14 the majority of [pupils will be working at level 5/6

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## Assessing attainment at the end of a key stage

The two attainment targets, **Learning about religion** and **Learning from religion** are closely related and neither should be taught in isolation. Therefore, assessment needs to take place in relation to both attainment targets.

In deciding on a pupil's level of attainment at the end of a key stage, teachers should judge which description best fits the pupil's performance. When doing so, each description should be considered alongside descriptions for adjacent levels.

It is important to note that not all aspects of religious education can be assessed. For example, pupils may express personal views and ideas that, although integral to teaching and learning, would not be appropriate for formal assessment.

The level descriptions for **Attainment target 1: Learning about religion** refer to how pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding with reference to:

- Beliefs, teachings and sources
- Practices and ways of life
- Forms of expression.

The level descriptions for **Attainment target 2: Learning from religion** refer to how pupils, in the light of their learning about religion, express their responses and insights with regard to questions and issues about:

- Identity and belonging
- Meaning, purpose and truth
- Values and commitments.

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## Level Descriptors

### Level 1

#### Attainment target 1

Pupils use some religious words and phrases to recognise and name features of religious life and practice. They can recall religious stories and recognise symbols, and other verbal and visual forms of religious expression.

#### Attainment target 2

Pupils talk about their own experiences and feelings, what they find interesting or puzzling and what is of value and concern to themselves and to others.

### Level 2

#### Attainment target 1

Pupils use religious words and phrases to identify some features of religion and its importance for some people. They begin to show awareness of similarities in religions. Pupils retell religious stories and suggest meanings for religious actions and symbols. They identify how religion is expressed in different ways.

#### Attainment target 2

Pupils ask, and respond sensitively to, questions about their own and others' experiences and feelings. They recognise that some questions cause people to wonder and are difficult to answer. In relation to matters of right and wrong, they recognise their own values and those of others.

### Level 3

#### Attainment target 1

Pupils use a developing religious vocabulary to describe some key features of religions, recognising similarities and differences. They make links between beliefs and sources, including religious stories and sacred texts. They begin to identify the impact religion has on believers' lives. They describe some forms of religious expression.

#### Attainment target 2

Pupils identify what influences them, making links between aspects of their own and others' experiences. They ask important questions about religion and beliefs, making links between their own and others' responses. They make links between values and commitments, and their own attitudes and behaviour.

### Level 4

#### Attainment target 1

Pupils use a developing religious vocabulary to describe and show understanding of sources, practices, beliefs, ideas, feelings and experiences. They make links between them, and describe some similarities and differences both within and between religions. They describe the impact of religion on people's lives. They suggest meanings for a range of forms of religious expression.

#### Attainment target 2

Pupils raise, and suggest answers to, questions of identity, belonging, meaning, purpose, truth, values and commitments. They apply their ideas to their own and other people's lives. They describe what inspires and influences themselves and others.

### Level 5

#### Attainment target 1

Pupils use an increasingly wide religious vocabulary to explain the impact of beliefs on individuals and communities. They describe why people belong to religions. They understand that similarities and differences illustrate distinctive beliefs within and between religions and suggest possible reasons for this. They explain how religious sources are used to provide answers to ultimate questions and ethical issues, recognising diversity in forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression, within and between religions.

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## Attainment target 2

Pupils ask, and suggest answers to, questions of identity, belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, values and commitments, relating them to their own and others' lives. They explain what inspires and influences them, expressing their own and others' views on the challenges of belonging to a religion.

## Level 6

### Attainment target 1

Pupils use religious and philosophical vocabulary to give informed accounts of religions and beliefs, explaining the reasons for diversity within and between them. They explain why the impact of religions and beliefs on individuals, communities and societies varies. They interpret sources and arguments, explaining the reasons that are used in different ways by different traditions to provide answers to ultimate questions and ethical issues. They interpret the significance of different forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression.

### Attainment target 2

Pupils use reasoning and examples to express insights into the relationship between beliefs, teachings and world issues. They express insights into their own and others' views on questions of identity and belonging, meaning, purpose and truth. They consider the challenges of belonging to a religion in the contemporary world, focusing on values and commitments.

## Level 7

### Attainment target 1

Pupils use a wide religious and philosophical vocabulary to show a coherent understanding of a range of religions and beliefs. They analyse issues, values and questions of meaning and truth. They account for the influence of history and culture on aspects of religious life and practice. They explain why the consequences of belonging to a faith are not the same for all people within the same religion or tradition. They use some of the principal methods by which religion, spirituality and ethics are studied, including the use of a variety of sources, evidence and forms of expression.

### Attainment target 2

Pupils articulate personal and critical responses to questions of meaning, purpose and truth and ethical issues. They evaluate the significance of religious and other views for understanding questions of human relationships, belonging, identity, society, values and commitments, using appropriate evidence and examples.

## Level 8

### Attainment target 1

Pupils use a comprehensive religious and philosophical vocabulary to analyse a range of religions and beliefs. They contextualize interpretations of religion with reference to historical, cultural, social and philosophical ideas. They critically evaluate the impact of religions and beliefs on differing communities and societies. They analyse differing interpretations of religious, spiritual and moral sources, using some of the principal methods by which religion, spirituality and ethics are studied. They interpret and evaluate varied forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression.

### Attainment target 2

Pupils coherently analyse a wide range of viewpoints on questions of identity, belonging, meaning, purpose, truth, values and commitments. They synthesise a range of evidence, arguments, reflections and examples, fully justifying their own views and ideas and providing a detailed evaluation of the perspectives of others.

## Exceptional performance

### Attainment target 1

Pupils use a complex religious, moral and philosophical vocabulary to provide a consistent and detailed analysis of religions and beliefs. They evaluate in depth the importance of religious diversity in a

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pluralistic society. They clearly recognise the extent to which the impact of religion and beliefs on different communities and societies has changed over time. They provide a detailed analysis of how religious, spiritual and moral sources are interpreted in different ways, evaluating the principal methods by which religion and spirituality are studied. They synthesise effectively their accounts of the varied forms of religious, spiritual and moral expression.

## Attainment target 2

Pupils analyse in depth a wide range of perspectives on questions of identity and belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, and values and commitments. They give independent, well-informed and highly reasoned insights into their own and others' perspectives on religious and spiritual issues, providing well-substantiated and balanced conclusions.



# Supporting the needs of members of faith communities and marking festivals in Haringey schools

## Introduction

Haringey is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse districts in the country with one of the largest black and minority ethnic populations of any local authority in England, with about half of its 220,000 residents being from minority ethnic backgrounds.

David Lammy MP (Tottenham) making his first speech in the House of Commons, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2000 said:

*'Although Tottenham is a constituency of much poverty, it has never been impoverished in its people. Through the centuries, many cultures of the world have traversed Tottenham High Road – white English people, Russians, Huguenots, Spaniards, Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Africans, Irish, Hasidic Jews, Asians, Caribbean islanders and, more recently, Kosovans and other people from Eastern Europe. There is no need to go to New York or California to experience dynamic diversity and vibrancy. One need not look only to the Commonwealth for a model of communities coming together. Under our own eyes, people from the far reaches of the world are living happily together, from different backgrounds, races and religions.*

*All contribute to the richness of Tottenham. All understand the importance of unity and working and living together. All celebrate and glory in the multi-faith, multicultural family that constitutes Tottenham. These people are a valuable resource. If that resource were an untapped oilfield or a new diamond mine, business would be queuing round the block to buy the rights. People are the best and most precious resource that we have.'*

## The purpose of this guidance

Faith is a powerful element of both personal and community identity. The diversity of society cannot be fully described and communities cannot be fully inclusive if faith is not included as multicultural communities are also multi-faith communities.

This guidance has been written to support Haringey schools in ensuring they meet the religious needs of all members of the school community at all levels. It has also been written in order to support schools as they work with their local communities and prepare their students to become confident and informed members of that society as they move into adult life.

Through the curriculum, everyday aspects of school life and the varied opportunities that they offer, schools introduce their students and their students' families to the experiences and heritages of the wider community in which they are placed. Haringey is fortunate to contain a vibrant multi-faith and multicultural community, where whilst some groups are recent arrivals to this country, others have been established for many years or centuries. Schools are often in a position of introducing their students and their families to the excitement and challenges that living in such a rich community can entail.

It is important to foster understanding and respect between different faith traditions as well as between different cultural and ethnic groups. All major faiths promote equality and respect for others as a fundamental value. In most cases, at a personal and community level, this translates into good community relations and integrity in public life.

Belonging to any community involves sharing good and bad times experienced by members of that community and this includes the celebration of festivals. It is therefore important that employees and students in local schools take the opportunity to develop an awareness of, and respect for, Holy Days from faiths other than their own.

Stereotypes based on religion can be stubborn and pernicious, as in the cases of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Such attitudes must be addressed within cohesion strategies if people of all faiths are to feel an equal sense of belonging and enjoy equal security in society.

We believe that schools that demonstrate good practice as described in this guidance will:

- create a positive atmosphere, where there is a shared commitment to value diversity and respect difference;
- challenge and prevent racism and discrimination, and promote good relations between people from different racial and religious groups;
- prepare students to be full citizens in today's multi-ethnic, multifaith society;
- make the workforce more representative of the communities they serve;
- improve staff morale and performance;
- avoid losing able staff; and
- make full use of the skills and ideas from people from different religious groups (for example, in the classroom or as members of governing bodies).

Please note: Throughout this guidance we have included information about the beliefs and practices of a range of faith communities. It is important however to appreciate that not all members of a faith community interpret the requirements of their faith for religious observance in the same way and that even within a small local community there may be members of faith groups whose practice varies widely. Schools must ensure that they do not make comparisons between members of faith communities or in any way suggest that any member of a faith is less observant or correct in practice in comparison with another.

### **Good Practice principles**

Schools should ensure that they:

- inform parents, students and staff of their commitment to support their right to practice their religion;
- give an accurate picture of the beliefs, practices and lifestyles of all faiths and cultures without representing them as exotic;

- deal appropriately with harassment, bullying or prejudicial behaviour from any member of the school's community towards members of any faith or culture because of their racial origin or faith;
- be mindful when organising work functions and social events related to work, to minimise potential conflicts between religious beliefs of a parent / governor / member of staff or student and his/her ability to engage in social activities related to school. For example organising events on Friday evenings will limit the ability of Jewish pupils and staff to attend;
- be aware of and sympathetic to the needs of members of any faith community in following faith requirements related to attendance at religious services or involvement in religious fasts during the year;
- ensure that it is possible for students and staff to bring food appropriate to their religious needs to school for lunchtimes, school functions etc. Nb. these foods should not be stored with other food;
- consider the needs of faith community members taking part in schools journey, for example where residential visits are organised ensuring that dietary needs are fully met, participants are able to attend worship when required or to be offered accommodation that respects their need for modesty.

### **Sharing social occasions in the school calendar**

Schools need to be aware of differences in cultural influences on social and festival times, for example not all Muslims will celebrate Id on the same day as they will obtain their information from different religious sources. This does not mean that some are right and others wrong.

If schools are aware of the religious communities represented within their community, it may be possible to ensure, whenever possible, that events in the school diary do not clash with days of significant religious importance to students or staff in the school.

During the school year there are a range of occasions when the school community or individual classes note particular events in the life of the school or those of individuals in the school community,

When a celebration can incorporate contributions from different local faith communities, as a public witness to their shared values, this can be a practical source of community pride and cohesion. In order that these may be as inclusive as possible it is important to consider the following points:

- Have you involved staff, parents and students in the planning process making sure they appreciate your concern to be inclusive and avoid offence?
- Are all relevant dietary needs catered for in planning or providing shared food?
- Are dress expectations for the event taking into consideration religious and cultural needs? Do these include restricting dress that some members of the school community would find offensive?

- Are entertainments and / or music culturally / religiously acceptable?

### **Taking time out of work and school for religious practice or celebrations**

Religious practice involves believers in duties such as the saying of prayers (sometimes at prescribed times), the keeping of fasts, and attendance at communal or family gatherings for worship or celebration. The current pattern of the school year already takes account of most needs for the communal religious observances of western Christians as schools are closed on Sundays, and the major Christian festivals fall within school holiday periods.

For religious believers there can be a conflict between their work or their student's education and full compliance with the needs of the faith community and individuals for religious observance. Schools therefore need to be aware of the needs of their students and adult members of the school community in regard to religious observance, and in particular any period when significant numbers are likely to be absent from school because of festivals. It would also be helpful for teachers if they knew of occasions when students are likely to be fasting or engaged in exceptional religious activity out of school hours so that internal tests, educational visits and heavy homework and coursework demands can be avoided.

Schools should consider the following points in determining their approach to the needs of schoolchildren and staff.

Key aspects should be:

- inform all parents, students and staff of their commitment to support their rights to practice their religion;
- be alert to and to deal appropriately with any harassment, bullying or prejudicial behaviour from any member of the school's community towards members of any faith or culture practicing their faith.
- be mindful when organising work functions and social events related to work, to minimise potential conflicts between religious beliefs of a parent / governor / member of staff or student and his/her ability to engage in social activities related to school.
- be aware of and sympathetic to the needs of members of any faith community in following faith requirements related to attendance at religious services during the year;
- inform parent in advance, when appropriate, that they will support students who are fasting and to inform staff, in advance, that they will support them when they are fasting;
- anticipate that fasting may make some students or adults weak or tired, and adapt the curriculum as appropriate. This could mean, for example, planning less energetic activities in P.E or reorganising evening events;

### **The legal position**

The DfES advises Head teachers to deal sensitively with requests to attend funerals or associated events and gives them the discretion to authorise such absences.

Similarly Head teachers have the right to authorise attendance at the wedding of a family member.

However, when it comes to absence for attendance at other religious events the law might be thought to be less helpful, referring to a need for the absence to have been “on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs.”

It is worth noting the reference to “the religious body to which the parent belongs”, and the fact that the meaning of this expression is not closely defined. Whilst this might refer to a denominational grouping, it might as well refer to a particular institution such as an individual Gurdwara.

If schools are aware of the religious communities represented within their community, it may be possible to ensure, whenever possible, that events in the school diary do not clash with days of significant religious importance to students or staff in the school. It is helpful if parents can be encouraged to give schools as much notice of a proposed absence as is reasonably possible and be willing to discuss with the school how work missed will be caught up.

It is important for everyone to feel free to talk about the place of religious experience in their own lives. In order that this can happen it is necessary to foster an environment where everyone is of equal importance, where diversity is celebrated and where the needs of everyone are treated fairly and equally. Within such an environment, cultural and religious diversity is regarded as positive and everyone can feel that they are able to express their viewpoints and beliefs in safety.

## **Festivals**

Haringey is a multicultural and multifaith community where many religious and secular festivals will be of importance to different members of the community across the year. Whilst it is important that schools mark these times, it is also important to understand that the level of involvement of non-believers in any festival must not compromise the beliefs of that individual, e.g. by expecting students in schools to act a part in a drama that they find conflicts with their own religious beliefs.

Festivals celebrated by members of the community or the school will provide many opportunities to help everyone to develop connections between faiths, festivals, key figures, places, stories and symbols. As they talk about the story associated with each festival and the way in which the festival is celebrated, children connect festivals to their faith context. For example it is important that right from the start young children learn that Christmas is a Christian festival celebrated by Christians.

Here are some principles which should be considered when selecting festivals to include in each school's planning calendar:

- Be aware of the cultures and faiths represented within your school.
- Plan festival focuses at the appropriate time of year to help students to make sense of their experiences.

- Ensure children are clear about the faith to which each festival belongs.
- Introduce any story attached to the festival at an appropriate level for the students.
- Enable students to appreciate that a festival is a celebration whilst ensuring that you do not give them or their carers the impression that they are being asked to participate at the level of a member of a faith community.
- If you intend inviting students to share foods related to festivals take the opportunity to talk about those food restrictions and laws which relate to the faith concerned and ensure that you are aware of the food laws adhered to by members of the group so that you do not offend or confuse.
- The ways in which people celebrate the festival should be clearly referenced to the faith and cultural tradition - e.g. the making of Diwali cards provides an opportunity to investigate and use Indian or Hindu art and symbol.
- Be alert to the need to avoid racial, cultural and gender stereotyping.
- Wherever possible involve members of the relevant community so that students realise the festival is really celebrated by real people.

Practitioners and faith community representatives should be careful that they are clear about the level at which they should approach these areas with young students. They should appreciate that their involvement is not an opportunity to convert or engage students in activities more appropriate to members of their faith community. It is also important to not use language that implies that everyone celebrates the festival in the same way or that implies that the school is a 'faith' school.

### **Advice / suggestions on festivals which reflect the 6 main faiths**

The following websites may be of use to you.

<http://www.directory.bham.ac.uk/reference/faith.htm>

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/birmingham/faith/faith\\_calendar\\_muslim.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/birmingham/faith/faith_calendar_muslim.shtml)

<http://www.refuel.org.uk/curric/festivals.html>

<http://www.reonline.org.uk/festivals.php>

<http://www.eefaithscouncil.org.uk/calea4.pdf>

Schools can also purchase a calendar of faiths from the Festival Shop:

<http://www.theredirectory.org.uk/orgs/festivalshop.html>

## Religious Holy Days – explanations

It is important to realise that not all members of a faith will celebrate or mark every festival indicated for that faith. Faiths are shown in alphabetical order as are the festivals within each faith.



### Bah'ai

The Baha'i Faith is an independent world religion with its own laws and ordinances which originated in Iran in the middle of the nineteenth century. The Founder is Baha'ullah (Glory of God), who was exiled and persecuted, and finally sent to Akka in the Holy Land, where he died in 1892. The spiritual and administrative centre of the Faith is thus in the Holy Land.

Baha'is believe in the oneness of mankind, and in one God, who has revealed His purpose progressively to mankind. There are followers in over 112,000 centres in the world and over 170 national bodies. Baha'is come from many diverse nationalities, cultures and backgrounds. Baha'is accept the validity of all religions and believe it is the individual's responsibility to investigate the truth in all matters. Women and men are equal in the sight of God.

Baha'is are required to say an obligatory prayer each day and read from the scriptures of the faith each morning and evening. In illness, they are exempted from obligatory prayer.

Baha'is have a great respect for life. They believe each person has a soul, which comes into being at conception and which progresses after death. A child before birth has a soul; therefore, abortion is strongly discouraged.

The Baha'i Faith has its own calendar consisting of 19 months, each having 19 days, plus a number of "Intercalary Days" to complete a full solar year. Holy Days and other events are celebrated on the same Gregorian date each year.

**Ascension of Abdu'l Baha:** recalls the son of the Founder of the Bah'ai Faith, Abdul 'Baha, ascending to heaven on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1921 in Haifa, Israel. <http://www.geocities.com/~quddus/feast/fhd10.html>

**Ascension of Baha'u'llah:** commemorates the death and ascension of Mirza Husayn Ali on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1892, at Bahji, near Acre (now in Israel), following Baha'u'llah's exile and imprisonment to this region. It is observed by prayers and readings and work is suspended.

**Ayyam-I-Ha:** celebration observed by hospitality and acts of charity that marks the beginning of a series of special days (Intercalary Days) that balance out the calendar.

**Birth of the Bab:** celebration of the birth of the herald of the faith, Mirza' Ali Muhammed, in on 20<sup>th</sup> October, 1819 in Shiraz.

**Birth of Baha'u'llah:** celebration of the birth of their teacher and Messiah. On this day Bah'ais refrain from work. <http://birth-of-baha-u-llah.123holiday.net/>

**Day of the Covenant:** this day, first celebrated on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 1901 is the celebration of the covenant given in the last will and testament of Baha'u'llah that appointed Abdu'l Baha as his successor.

**Declaration of the Bab:** 'The Bab' means 'the gate'. This festival recognises the declaration on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1844 by Ali Muhammed, the Bab, in Shiraz, Iran, that he was the anticipated "Coming One" of all religions. Work is suspended.

**Martyrdom of the Bab:** Bahai-Ali Muhammed was executed by firing squad on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1850 by Persian political and religious powers at a barracks in Tabriz, Iran. The day is observed by abstaining from commerce and work.

**Nineteen Day Fast:** A fast observed by Bah'ai adults in good health from sunrise to sundown when they take no food or drink.

**Ridvan:** Ridvan means Paradise. During a 12 day period from 21st April to 2nd May Bah'ai's commemorate the time in 1863 when Baha'u'llah declared that he was God's messenger for this age. Work is suspended on days 1, 9, and 12 of the festival. The election of Baha'i Assemblies takes place on the 1st day of Ridvan.



## **Buddhism**

There are many special or holy days held throughout the year by the Buddhist community. Many of these days celebrate the birthdays of Bodhisattvas in the Mahayana tradition or other significant dates in the Buddhist calendar. The most significant celebration happens every May on the night of the full moon, when Buddhists all over the world celebrate the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha over 2,500 years ago.

**Asalha Puja Day** ("Dhamma Day"): a day to pay homage to the Buddha. It takes place on the full moon day of the 8th lunar month (approximately July) and commemorates the Buddha's first teaching: the turning of the wheel of the Dhamma (Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta) to the five ascetics at the Deer Park (Sarnath) near Benares city, India.

**Bodhi Day:** Buddhist celebration of the time when Prince Gautama took his place under the Bodhi tree, vowing to remain there until he attained supreme enlightenment.

**Buddha Day:** Another name for Vesak when Buddhists celebrate the birthday of Buddha.

**Dalai Lama's birthday:** Tibetan Buddhist celebration with traditional dances, picnics, and singing.

**Dharma Day:** celebrated on the full moon of July, this day recalls the Buddha's first teaching following his enlightenment in the deer park in Sarnath. It is marked by readings from Buddhist scriptures and reflection.

**Kathina:** Friends and family join to celebrate harmony. Buddhist monks and nuns in the Theravada tradition celebrate the end of the three month rain retreat and are given new robes.  
<http://www.dhammadakaya.or.th/events/kathina2003.htm>



**Nirvana Day:** regional observance of the death of Buddha. It is also known as Parinirvana day and is celebrated by some Buddhists on February 15th. Nirvana Day is the celebration of Buddha's death when he reached total Nirvana, at the age of 80.

**Obon Festival:** Japanese Buddhist festival to honour the dead. Involves lighting bonfires, traditional meals, paper lanterns, folk dances.  
<http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Island/6653/obon1.htm>

**Parinirvana day:** see Nirvana Day.

**Pavarana Day:** this day marks the conclusion of the Rains retreat (Vassa). In the following month, the kathina ceremony is held, during which the laity gather to make formal offerings of robe cloth and other requisites to the Sangha.

**Rohatsu:** Japanese Buddhist celebration of the morning after the enlightenment of Buddha.

**Spring Ohigon:** a special time for Jodo Shinshu Buddhists. They listen to the teaching of the Buddha and meditate on the perfection of enlightenment.

**Wesak / Vesak:** holiest of Buddhist Holy Days, it celebrates Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death. It is a public holiday in some countries.



## Christianity

Christianity is a world-wide religion followed by people of many different cultures and backgrounds. Christians are people who are followers of Jesus Christ and who believe in a God who can be known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Though Christians hold much in common, there is a wide diversity of beliefs, ethical standpoints and forms of worship found within the many denominations and groups which make up the Christian Church.

The two major groups of Christians are **Protestants** and **Roman Catholics**. There are many faith communities which are **Protestant**, for example: **The Church of Scotland, Baptist, Salvation Army, Pentecostal, Episcopalian**, and so on. **The Anglican Church**, which is Protestant, includes the Scottish Episcopal Church. **The Roman Catholic Church** is world-wide and diverse but is centred on the leadership of the Pope and the Bishops, and the importance of the Sacraments, especially Mass. The other main Christian group in the world is the **Orthodox Church**, found mainly in Greece and Russia. There are many Greek Orthodox Christians in Haringey.

The Christian year consists of a cycle of liturgical seasons in some Christian churches which set out when feasts, memorials, commemorations and times of reflection take place. Some, like Christmas Day, happen on the same date every year, while others move around within a range of dates. The main festival that moves is Easter, and since many other festivals have their dates fixed in relation to Easter, they move with it. Christians belong to various groups or denominations that vary slightly in their beliefs and practices.

The dates of the festivals vary somewhat between the western Church (Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant) and the Eastern (Orthodox) church, though the sequence and logic is the same. The extent to which the fasts and festivals are celebrated also varies between churches; in general Protestant churches observe far fewer of them than Catholic and Orthodox churches, and in particular are less likely to celebrate feasts of the Virgin Mary and the saints.

**Advent:** time of preparation for observing the birth of Jesus. Advent begins on the Sunday nearest November 30 and is the beginning of the Christian worship year. It is observed with the lighting of advent candles, display of advent wreaths, and special ceremonies. The season continues to the end of December 24.

**All Hallow's Eve:** celebration as a prelude to All Saints Day.

**All Saints' Day:** day for honouring saints and a Holy Day of Obligation in the Roman Catholic Church where saints have special formal status.

**All Souls' Day:** sometimes called the "Day of the Dead", this is always November 2nd (celebrated on November 3rd if the 2nd is a Sunday). A Roman Catholic day of remembrance for friends and loved ones who have passed away.

**Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary:** celebration on 25<sup>th</sup> March of the visit by the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary announcing the coming birth of Jesus.

**Ascension of Jesus:** Celebrates the ascension of Jesus into heaven, where Christians believe he sits at the right hand of God the Father and prays for the world. Ascension Day is a reminder to Christians that Jesus took his humanity into heaven. The festival marks the end of Jesus' post-resurrection appearance and is perhaps the earliest observed celebration in Christianity.

**Ash Wednesday:** The day Lent begins, forty days before Good Friday. It is a day of penitence to clean the soul before the Lent fast. Roman Catholic, Anglican, and some other churches hold services at which worshippers are marked with ashes as a symbol of death, and sorrow for sin. The use of ashes, made by burning palm crosses from the previous Palm Sunday, is very symbolic.

**Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary:** Roman Catholic observance honouring the belief that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was taken directly to heaven at her death.

**Candlemas:** Takes place 40 days after Christmas and comes from two separate events- the presentation of the Jesus in the temple and the purification of the Virgin Mary. Today it is recognized primarily by Roman Catholic and Anglican churches. New beginnings are celebrated and candles are lit.

**Christ the King:** Roman Catholic celebration of the pre-eminence of Jesus over all earthly authorities.

**Christmas Day:** the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ is observed by prayers, exchanging of gifts, and family parties. In most churches, the Bible readings and the sermons during Christmas season concern the birth of Christ, the slaughter of the innocents, the flight to Egypt, and other related events.

The Christmas season begins at sundown on 24 December and lasts through sundown on 5 January. The calendar dates for Christmas and Epiphany are the same in the eastern and western

Church, but many eastern Christians still used the unreformed Julian calendar, which is 13 days behind the Gregorian calendar. Their church calendar reads 25 December when the civil calendar says it is 7 January, and their church calendar reads 6 January when the civil calendar says it is 19 January.

**Christmas Eve:** Celebration of the arrival of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus. It is observed with worship, often at midnight, candle lighting, manger scenes, and festive meals.

**Christmas Fast:** Orthodox Christians fast to observe the Nativity of Jesus.

**Circumcision of Jesus:** Christian recognition of its Jewish foundations. The infant Jesus was brought to the Temple for his circumcision.

**Corpus Christi:** main Catholic celebration in honour of the Eucharist - Blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. The real presence of the body and blood of Jesus is honoured.

**Dormition (falling asleep) of the Theotokos:** Greek Orthodox observance of the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into heaven of the Virgin Mary.

**Easter:** the most holy of Christian sacred days. The day commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from his death by crucifixion. Observances include worship services beginning at sunrise, special music, feasting, and parades.

**Epiphany:** celebrated by most Christians on January 6 to commemorate the presentation of the infant Jesus to the Magi, or three wise men. Roman Catholics celebrate Epiphany on the Sunday which falls between January 2 and January 8.

**Fast in honour of the Holy Mother of Lord Jesus:** Orthodox start of a 14 day fast to prepare for the Falling Asleep (dormition) of the Theotokos.

**Feast of St. Basil:** Orthodox celebration of the liturgy. Bread is often shared as a symbol of prosperity and good luck.

**Good Friday:** remembrance of the crucifixion of Jesus and related events.

**Holy Pascha:** Orthodox festival celebrating the resurrection of Jesus.

**Holy Thursday:** Observance of the final meal that Jesus observed with his disciples. It is usually observed with the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

**Holy Saturday:** Saturday before Easter – a time of meditation on the mystery of Jesus Christ.

**Holy Week:** Christians observe the week before Easter with solemn ceremonies based on events in Jesus' life, especially on Holy Thursday and Good Friday.

**Immaculate Conception:** Roman Catholic day of celebrating the belief that Mary, mother of Jesus, was preserved of original sin all of her life. A day of obligation and required church attendance.

**Lammas:** First fruits celebration observed by placing bread baked from first harvest on the altar.

**Lazarus Saturday:** Orthodox festival remembering the resurrection of Lazarus by Jesus. Observed on the day before Palm Sunday, attention is called to the resurrection of people by Jesus.

**Lent:** forty day period of preparation for Easter. A time of intense devotion, it is observed by fasting, frequent worship, and acts of charity.

**Meatfare Sunday:** Orthodox observation of limiting of food in order to fix attention on the Second Coming of Christ.

**Nativity of the Mother of God:** Orthodox celebration of the birth of Mary, mother of Jesus.

**Palm Sunday:** celebration of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The day begins Holy Week and is observed by worship celebrations and parades using palm branches.

**Pentecost:** celebration of the day when the Holy Spirit came to the disciples in the forms of tongues of fire and rushing wind. It is a traditional day for baptism and confirmation of new Christians.

**Sacred Heart:** Catholic occasion to pay homage to Christ's all encompassing love for humanity. Solemn worship is observed.

**Saint Andrew's Day:** Observance of the coming of Christianity to Scotland. The martyrdom of St. Andrew is remembered as Advent is about to begin.

**Saint Francis Day:** Catholic recognition of service to the people and appreciation of the natural world, as practiced by St Francis & Franciscan Monastic Order which he founded.

**Saint Michael and All Angels:** Christian celebration of angels, companions who help fight off the power of evil and who are present at the hour of death.

**Saint Patrick's Day:** Celebration of Patrick who brought Christianity to Ireland in early days of the faith and is Patron Saint of that country.

**Saint Stephen's Day:** day to remember the first Christian martyr; celebrated on Boxing Day.

**Shrove Tuesday:** Carnival day, eve of Ash Wednesday which begins Lent, a time of fasting and devotion. Traditionally involved using all the rich foods from the larder prior to the fast. Pancakes are often served and also known as Fat Tuesday in some places.

**Theophany:** Orthodox commemoration of the Baptism of Jesus and the manifestation of God.

**Transfiguration of Jesus:** Commemoration of the experience on Mt. Tabor where Jesus' physical appearance became brilliant as his connection with traditional Jewish holy figures became evident to his disciples.

**Trinity Sunday or Day:** celebrated the first Sunday after Pentecost, Christians honour the belief in one God with a threefold nature.



## Hindu

Hinduism is a religion that began in India. Today, many people around the world follow a wide variety of Hindu practices. They believe that there is one God but worship Him in many different forms: mainly as Shiva, the goddess Shakti, and Vishnu, who is usually worshipped in the forms of Rama and Krishna. There are more than 20 Hindu festivals during a year, with traditional stories connected to each of them.

**Baisakhi (Vaisakhi):** first day of the Hindu new year is marked by Baisakhi, primarily a harvest festival. Greetings that wish good life in coming days are exchanged.

**Diwali /Divali / Deepavali:** perhaps the most well-known of the Indian festivals: it is celebrated throughout India. It usually takes place eighteen days after Dusshera and is colloquially known as the "festival of lights", for the common practice is to light small oil lamps (called *divas*) and place them around the home. The celebration of the festival is invariably accompanied by the exchange of sweets and the explosion of fireworks. As with other Indian festivals, Diwali signifies many different things to people across the country. In north India, Diwali celebrates Rama's homecoming, which is his return to Ayodhya after the defeat of Ravana and his coronation as king; in Gujarat, the festival honours Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth; and in Bengal, it is associated with goddess Kali. Everywhere, it signifies the renewal of life, and accordingly it is common to wear new clothes on the day of the festival; similarly, it heralds the approach of winter and the beginning of the sowing season.

**Dussehra (Durga Puja):** Dussehra (tenth day) is a significant Hindu festival, celebrated with much joy. The occasion marks the triumph of Lord Rama over the demon king, Ravana, the victory of good over evil. The festival is also celebrated with intense fervour in West Bengal in the form of Durga Puja. The festivities last for ten days, of which nine nights are spent in worship, 'Navaratri'. The tenth day is devoted to the worship of goddess Durga.

In Tamil Nadu, the first three days are dedicated to the worship of Lakshmi, Goddess of wealth and prosperity, the next three days to Saraswati, Goddess of learning and arts and the last three days to Shakti (Durga). <http://www.namasthenri.com/fairsandfestivals/dussera.htm>

**Ganesh Chaturthi:** festival honouring the god of prosperity, prudence, and success. Images of Ganesha are paraded and worshipped.

**Holi:** Spring festival dedicated to Krishna. People shower each other with coloured water and smear red and green powder on each other.

**Janam Ashtami:** celebration of the birth of Krishna. Nightlong prayers are held in the Temples.

**Maha Shivratri:** festival in honour of Lord Shiva and his marriage to goddess Parvati. Ceremonies involving prayers and hymns take place mostly at night.

**Navratri:** Festival of the divine mother honouring Durga, wife of Shiva, and seeking her blessings. It is also observed as a celebration recalling the days of Lord Krishna.

**Raksha Bandhan:** special occasion to celebrate the bond between brothers and sisters of all ages by tying a holy thread around the wrist. Rakhi means 'a bond of protection', and Raksha Bandhan signifies that the strong must protect the weak from all that's evil. Raksha Bandhan tightens the bond of love between the sister and brother.

**Shivaratri (Mahashivaratri):** Hindu worship of Shiva with flowers. The Month of February signifies the festival of "Maha Shivratri" Devotees keep a fast on Shivratri and observe strict rules. The night of the festival echoes with sacred chants and the ringing of bells. The Motivations for the celebration are mental and physical self control.



- **Islam**

All the Muslim festivals and observances follow the Islamic calendar which has fewer days than the solar year. So, each year, the festival dates keep coming forward. Most of the festivals involve religious observance, fasting, feasting or sacrifices, and are occasions for Muslims as a community to get together and strengthen their bonds of brotherhood.

**Al-Hijra:** remembrance of the migration of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers to Madinah in 622 c.e. and the establishment of the first Islamic state. The Muslim calendar dates from this event. This celebration marks the beginning of the Muslim New Year. No specific religious rituals are observed.

**Eid-al-Adha /Id ul Adha:** Feast of Sacrifice, the most important feast of Islam. It is celebration at the conclusion of the Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) and is a four day festival recalling Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son, Ishma'il, in obedience to Allah.

**Eid al Fitr /Id ul Fitr:** A three day feast marks the close of Ramadan. It is a festival of thanksgiving to Allah for the month of Ramadan. It involves prayer, giving of charity, wearing finest clothing, sharing a family feast and fostering understanding with other religions.

**Hajj:** Pilgrimage to Makkah on the 7th-12th days of the month of Dhu al-Hajja. Concludes with Eid / Id ul Adha when those not travelling to Makkah also take part.

**Lailat-al Miraj & Israa':** observance of Prophet Muhammad's night journey from Makkah to the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and his ascension into heaven.

**Lailat al-Qadr:** Night of Power, marking the first revelation of the Qur'an to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Observed during the last ten days of Ramadan. Prayers are said to Allah for a good destiny.

**Ramadan:** month long commemoration of Prophet Muhammad's reception of the divine revelation recorded in the Qur'an. The event begins when authorities in Saudi Arabia sight the new moon of the ninth month. It is the holiest period of the Islamic Year. There is strict fasting from sunrise to sunset.



## Judaism

The Jewish Calendar is lunar in character, each month consisting of either 29 or 30 days. The lunar year consists of approximately 354 days, while a solar year (the time it takes the earth to make a complete circuit round the sun) consists of 365 days. Therefore, some adjustment of the lunar year has to be made to match it to the solar year.

**Hanukkah:** Festival of Lights. It commemorates the Maccabean recapture and rededication of the Jerusalem Temple in 165-164B.C.E. Special readings and praise songs focus on liberty and freedom. The eight candle Menorah is lighted.

**Passover / Pesach:** eight day celebration of the deliverance of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. The story of the Exodus from Egypt is recounted, during a symbolic family meal (the Seder) and the ongoing struggle of all peoples for freedom from internal and external tyranny is celebrated.

**Purim:** celebration of the deliverance of the Jewish minority in Persia from genocide. Charity to the poor, sharing food with friends, and vigorous merrymaking mark the observance.

**Rosh Hashanah:** New Year takes place around September/October, and is considered one of the most important and serious holidays (or High Holy Days) in the Jewish calendar. It is a time for celebration, reflection and repentance for sins committed in the previous year. Rosh Hashanah is also a time for celebration - traditions include eating apples dipped in honey in the hope that this will lead to a sweet year.

Rosh Hashanah lasts for two days commencing on the evening before the first day. Families eat special meals together and attend synagogue. The two days of festival are days when members of the community will need to be able to celebrate fully.

**Shavuot:** Taking places seven weeks after Passover (usually around late May/early June), this festival commemorates Moses being given the Ten Commandments. The festival lasts two days and requires relatively little advance preparation; however, it is traditional to eat dairy products, as when the Jews were awaiting the arrival of their commandments and were unsure as to what their new dietary laws would be, they ate only dairy products and vegetables, to avoid eating the meat of any animals which might be forbidden.

**Simchat Torah:** Following immediately from Succot is Simchat Torah, which celebrates the end of the annual cycle of reading the Torah in synagogue - and starting reading from the beginning again.

**Sukkot:** This festival begins five days after the end of Yom Kippur and commemorates the booths the Israelites constructed in the wilderness and lived in after their exodus from Egypt. During the eight-day festival, Jews are supposed to live in a similar booth known as a Succah

(dwelling) - the walls are made of wood and the ceiling of greenery to leave the stars visible. In countries such as Israel where the climate permits, many people sleep in the Succah, but elsewhere it is used mainly for meals only.

Work is not permitted during two holy days at the beginning and the end of this period when staff and students will request leave.

**Tisha b'Av:** The 9th of Av, is a solemn day commemorating the destruction of the Second Temple. On this day Jews will not work, will be fasting for 25 hours and spending the day in mourning and prayer. It will be necessary for members of the Jewish community to arrive home in time to eat before the fast commences. Services are held in the evening and early the following morning.

**Tu B'shevat:** celebrates the New Year for the Trees, rejoicing in the fruit of the tree and the fruit of the vine, celebrating the splendid, abundant gifts of the natural world. Tu B'Shevat marks the beginning of spring in Israel. To mark this moment, school children plant trees.

**Yom Hashoah:** Jewish Holocaust Day. The day has been established to remember six million Jews killed by the Nazis in 1933-1945. It is observed by many non-Jews as well.

**Yom Kippur:** The Ten Days of Repentance end with Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, which is the day on which the fates of all Jews are sealed for the coming year. This High Holy Day is the most solemn and serious day in the Jewish calendar, which involves praying for forgiveness for sins and afflicting oneself as punishment for those committed in the past year.

Jews fast (refraining from any food or drink) for 25 hours from sundown on the previous evening until sundown the next night, and are not allowed to work, bathe or wear leather shoes. The fast begins with a special evening service known as Kol Nidre (All Vows), and synagogue services last for the whole of the following day until the Fast ends. Jews are expected to spend the day in synagogue or in prayer.

Although it is a solemn day, Yom Kippur is also thought of as a happy day because it is the time for Jews to cleanse themselves of wrongdoings and reach a spiritual high. Fasting is not only done as a means of affliction but also because nothing is supposed to detract congregants from their prayers on the day. However, children below Barmitzvah or Batmitzvah age, pregnant women and diabetics are discouraged from fasting, as is anybody whose health is likely to be seriously affected by the 25-hour abstinence.



**Sikh**

There are numerous Sikh fairs and festivals. Some are of local importance, such as Hola Mohalla of Anandpur. The most important festivals are observed by the Sikhs wherever they are. On such occasions the whole Sikh families of a particular place gather in a Gurdwara which has been decorated and illuminated. The Guru Granth Sahib is read constantly, hymns are sung in chorus or by professional Sikh singers, prayers are said and kara prashad is distributed in the whole congregation.



Literally festivals, Gurpurbs are anniversaries associated with the lives of the Sikh Gurus. The Sikhs celebrate 10 Gurpurbs in a year. At each of these festivals, one of the ten gurus is honoured. Of these the most important are the birthdays of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh and the martyrdom days of Guru Arjun and Guru Tegh Bahadur.

**Baisakhi (Vaisakhi):** New Year's Day in the Punjab is celebrated with joyous music and dance. It falls on April 13, though once in 36 years it occurs on April 14th. Sikhs celebrate this as a collective birthday as the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, founded the Khalsa (the Sikh brotherhood) on this day in 1699.

Sikhs visit Gurdwaras and listen to kirtans (religious songs) and discourses. After the prayer, kara prashad is shared by the congregation. Then the congregation repairs to the langar, to share the community lunch served by volunteers. Processions are led by Sikhs dressed as the first baptised Sikhs, the Panj Pyaras. Mock duels and bands playing religious tunes are part of the processions.

**Birth of Guru Nanak:** Festival honouring the birthday of their founder, the first Guru who was born on 20th October, 1469 at Rai-Bhoi-di Talwandi in the present district of Shekhupura (Pakistan). The Birthday of Guru Nanak falls on full moon day of the month Kartik. On this day the Birthday is celebrated every year.

**Death of Guru Nanak:** Observance of the passing of the first Guru.

**First Parkash:** The Sikh scripture, the Adi Granth, is installed in the Golden Temple.

**Guru Gobind Singh's Birthday:** Festival honouring the birth of the founder of the Khalsa who lived from 1469-1539 C.E.

**Guru Nanak's Birthday:** celebration (Gurpurb) recalling the birth of the first Sikh Guru who lived from 1469-1539 C.E. It is marked by sacred readings, prayers, hymns and sharing food.

**Hola Mohalla:** held at Anandpur Sahib, it was started by Guru Gobind Singh Sahib as a gathering of Sikhs for military exercises and mock battles on this day. The mock battles were followed by music and poetry competitions. The Nihang Singh's carry on the martial tradition with mock battles and displays of swordsmanship and horse riding.

**Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev:** the martyrdom anniversary of Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru, falls in May or June, the hottest months in India. He was tortured to death under the orders of Mughal Emperor, Jahangir, at Lahore on 25 May 1606. Celebrations consist of Kirtan, Katha, lectures, Karah Parshad and Langar in the Gurdwara.

## Frequently Asked Questions

***What do I do if parents ask to withdraw their child from the curriculum because of their religious beliefs?***

By being as aware as possible of cultural and religious sensitivities schools should hopefully minimise situations arising where parents make a request to withdraw their child from National Curriculum subjects. Where such a request is made parents should be reminded that the law only entitles parents to withdraw their children from Collective Worship, sex education and RE.

***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.

***We have had several students withdrawn from participating in Christmas activities over a fair period of the autumn term- what should we do?***

The faith and cultural profiles of schools in Haringey are ever changing and schools need to be responsive to their communities. It can often appear to non-Christian families that from

October onwards community schools begin to connect many parts of the curriculum to activities related either closely or loosely to Christmas and to turn into Christian schools. Parents begin to be uncomfortable with the way that their children's beliefs may be compromised by being included in a range of experiences. Some of the activities that cause distress have little or no relation to mainstream Christian religious beliefs; instead they are associated with customs connected to this time of year, e.g. making and displaying classroom decorations or having a visit from 'Father Christmas'.

Christmas parties have no connection to Christian beliefs. It may be more useful to call and focus these as end of year parties in order to ensure participation by a wide group of students and staff.

Schools should

- try to see curriculum offer through the eyes of their students and their families;
- consider whether they are providing a broad curriculum offer that is inclusive in the weeks leading to the end of term;
- clarify which elements of their curriculum are religious and which cultural and decode these for their community;
- expect no non-Christian student to speak or sing words professing beliefs that they do not agree with, for example calling Jesus God.

***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.

***If a student from any faith is withdrawn from a lesson or activity, how can this be conducted sensitively so as to avoid embarrassment or a feeling of isolation?***

Embarrassment could be kept to a minimum by early consultation with the student and the parents who should have the responsibility for explaining to the student the reasons for the withdrawal. In the case where the student is withdrawn from the activity but remains physically present, another activity could be provided by the family. In the case of actual withdrawal (during a sex education lesson, for example) the school will need to consider issues relating to health, safety and supervision.

Care should be taken to treat the student with respect and to avoid drawing undue attention to what is happening.

***After the French ban on wearing religious dress in schools and recent legal rulings about Muslim dress, should students be allowed to wear overt religious symbols in school or be forced to wear standard uniform?***

The governing body of each school decides on the uniform policy or dress code, and it is the head teacher's responsibility to make sure pupils keep to the rules. While students must stick to the school's uniform policy, schools must be considerate to the needs of different cultures, races and religions. For example, Muslim girls should be allowed to wear appropriate dress that

respects their desire for modesty and Sikh boys allowed to grow their hair and cover with traditional head covering. It is inappropriate for a student to be punished for breaking uniform rules that make him or her adopt a different cultural, racial or religious dress code.

***How should schools ensure that they support the needs of all their students in relation to physical education?***

PE is a national curriculum subject that has to be taught to all students in all schools. However schools should adopt a sensitive, flexible approach to this issue. There is some evidence to suggest that participation and enjoyment of sport is enhanced where students feel comfortable about their PE uniform; this is particularly true for girls. Schools should therefore choose a PE uniform, which is practical, comfortable and appropriate to the activity involved. Gender, religious and racial discrimination issues must also be considered.

Where schools do not have changing rooms, they should organise separate changing facilities. There are a number of ways that this can be achieved. They could organise separate space by using curtains or screens to create individual or gender appropriate changing spaces. Alternatively students could change in shifts.

Clothing for PE or swimming needs to be appropriate for the activity while at the same time ensuring modesty and dignity are respected. Schools should have agreed examples of a range of acceptable and unacceptable clothing, explaining the reasons for school policy and practice.

All jewellery should be removed in order to prevent injury to the wearer of the jewellery or other participants. Where difficulties arise in relation to the removal of religious symbols contact should be made with parents/carers to ensure they are aware of the potential dangers associated with the wearing of such items. Sometimes danger can be reduced if items can be attached to the skin with sweat bands or plasters.

Attention also needs to be paid to options related to changing facilities and showering. Where schools have showers students could shower in their swimming costumes.

***If a student went to a teacher, for example his/her Form tutor, with doubts or worries about religion, from where could the school get advice on how to support the student?***

All faiths would expect the school to discuss the matter with the student's parents.

***What do we do about creationist views in Science?***

Many observant members of a range of world religions express concern about how evolution and creationist views of the origins of the world are taught in science lessons. Schools need therefore to ensure that teachers do not imply that religious perspectives are narrow or primitive when introducing this subject.

SACRE Question about Examination Data

Avi Becker responded that there is no national data that gives the possibility to compare RE results with statistical neighbours or similar schools.

The DfES in the Autumn Package only gives benchmarking data for English, Maths and science.

Value added analysis

1. For the children in Haringey who were entered for full RE GCSE and based on their prior attainment at KS3

The number expected to attain a grade C or higher (based on national value Added data) was 270, number who actually achieved grade C or higher was 316 - showing overall very good progress

2. For the children in Haringey who were entered for short course RE GCSE and based on their prior attainment at KS3

The number expected to attain a grade C or higher (based on national value Added data) was 188, number who actually achieved grade C or higher was 256 - also showing overall very good progress

