

Religious Observance Policy

Introduction

In accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, and the advice contained in the Scottish Government's letter of February 2011, it is the policy of the authority and the school to hold acts of religious observance.

Definition

Religious observance is defined for schools in Scotland as:

“Community acts which aim to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community and express and celebrate the shared values of the school community”

Religious Observance Review Group Report.

Purpose

Religious observance will provide experiences, which will be meaningful to all pupils and staff, aiding their spiritual development. The school community comprises staff, pupils and families from a variety of faith, backgrounds and worldviews. This diversity will be valued and considered when planning acts of religious observance.

Aims

The aims of religious observance are defined as:

“To promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community;

To express and celebrate the shared values of the school community” Religious Observance Review Group Report.

Spiritual development

“Includes being helped to recognise, reflect upon and develop a deeper understanding of the value and worth of each individual” Religious Observance Review Group Report. A Curriculum for Excellence encourages each individual within a school community to develop as “a successful learner, confident individual, responsible citizen and effective contributor”.

To further these aims, the school will:

- allow pupils and staff to engage in shared activities reflecting and expressing their spiritual needs and aspirations;
- celebrate important occasions in the life of the school and the community;
- involve pupils and staff in experiences which stimulate, challenge and extend their capacities

for spiritual response to the world in which they live.

Withdrawal

Under the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, parents / carers have the right to ask for their child to be withdrawn from religious observance and the school will deal with such requests with sensitivity and understanding. The head teacher will offer to meet with any

parent wishing to withdraw their child to ensure that they are clear about the school policy on religious observance.

In particular, parents should be reassured that the religious observance planned by the school adopts an open and respectful approach and does not seek to compromise the beliefs of any pupils or their families.

Where a child is withdrawn from religious observance, suitable arrangements will be made for the pupil to participate in a worthwhile alternative activity.

Quality

The school intends to provide religious observance events of high quality which will further the aims of these community acts, as defined above.

Evaluation

Regular evaluation of the religious observance programme and the quality of religious observance events will take place under the direction of the Head Teacher. The quality of religious observance may also be subject to external evaluation by officers of the authority or HMI inspectors.

Location

Consideration will be given to providing the most appropriate high quality location for religious observance events in the school to allow for full participation in the event.

Worship

The following extract from the Scottish Government’s letter of February 2011 will be considered when planning religious observance events:

“Where the school, whether denominational or non-denominational, is continuous with a faith community, that community’s faith in the “focus of worship”, may be assumed and worship may be considered to be appropriate as part of the formal activity of the school.

Where, as in most non-denominational schools, there is a diversity of beliefs and practices, the review group believes that the appropriate context for an organised act of worship is within the informal curriculum as part of the range of activities offered for example by religions, groups, chaplains and other religious leaders.”

