

## 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.

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

In many Christian non-denominational protestant churches, individual congregations may have periods of prayer and fasting that may last of a weekend, a week or a fortnight. These will not fit into traditional patterns of festivals but rather reflect the dynamism of a specific local church or group of churches. These fasts will often include nightly meetings and final celebratory events.

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?

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 their faith and / or 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.

The following websites may be of use to you:

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

<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>

### **Frequently Asked Question:**

#### **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 direct 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.

## **Religious Holy Days**

### **Notes and 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 Bahá'í 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 Bahá'í 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 Bahá'í 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.dhammadaya.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 remembering 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:** This festival takes place 40 days after Christmas and comes from two separate events- the presentation of 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:** Greek and Russian 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:** man 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.

The Greek and Russian Orthodox churches celebrate this Festival on a different day from western churches and therefore may request leave of absence for their festival during term time.

**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:** Greek and Russian 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:** Greek and Russian 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:** Greek and Russian Orthodox observation of limiting of food in order to fix attention on the Second Coming of Christ.

**Nativity of the Mother of God:** Greek and Russian 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:** Greek 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.



## Hinduism

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/dusseera.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

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 in relation to the school year and calendar. 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:** The event begins when authorities in Saudi Arabia sight the new moon of the ninth month. There is strict fasting from sunrise to sunset.

Fasting in the month of Ramadan, the month of revelation of the Holy Qur'an, is an obligation for all Muslims past the age of puberty. It is the holiest period of the Islamic Year. There are exemptions from these requirements for some people, such as, those who are sick, those engaging in a long journey, menstruating women, or those who are frail in old age. Exemptions have to be made up later or compensated for, e.g. by fasting on another day or by feeding the poor. Fasting at other times is also encouraged but is non-obligatory.

Fasting is undertaken for the sake of Allah, the Creator, the Merciful, the Loving (to mention just three of His names or attributes) and it is an expiation of human failings. It cultivates virtues such as piety, love of God, brotherhood, vigilance, devotion, patience, unselfishness, moderation, thriftiness and satisfaction with what one has, discipline, self-control, and compassion for fellow human beings who might suffer hunger and deprivation unwillingly and other spiritual benefits.

Fasting in Islam is not considered to be merely denial of food and drink alone. Muslims believe they should also try to restrain their other senses, such as the eye, ears, and particularly the tongue, avoiding backbiting, scandal-mongering, obscenity, lust, confrontation and such matters.

Fasting in Ramadan is one of the main requirements of the Islamic faith. Ramadan is the name of the month of fasting when Muslims are required to abstain from all food, drink and sexual activity (where appropriate), from 1 1/2 - 2 hours before dawn to nightfall through the 30 or 29 days between one new moon and the next. The daily fast begins 15-20 minutes before the earliest time of the Fajr prayer and finishes at the time of Maghrib (sunset) prayer.

It is very important for many Muslim families that their children should begin participating in the practice of fasting at an early age. Most children of secondary school age, as they are considered adult members of their communities, will be expected to fast and many primary school children will be fasting as well. Younger pupils may fast for part of Ramadan, or only for certain days of each week.

Teachers therefore need to bear in mind that the routine of Muslim families is entirely different during Ramadan. The whole household will be awake earlier in the morning and will stay up later at night, particularly when Ramadan falls in the summer months. Young children may well become more tired or excitable in school during this time even if they are not fasting themselves.

As well as considerations outlined earlier in this document, schools should consider the following points in determining their approach to the needs of the Muslim schoolchildren in their care during Ramadan:

- explain to parents/carers any special provisions that will be made for pupils who are fasting during Ramadan
- in primary schools, to establish a register of those pupils who will be fasting, and on which days, based on parental permission, given either verbally or in writing. Pupils of secondary age are expected to fast and it would not therefore be a practical or reliable course of action to attempt to establish a register with them.
- make special provision at lunchtimes for pupils who are fasting but cannot go home. They may want to rest and be quiet or they may enjoy taking part in special activities that can be arranged for them while other pupils are having their lunch. They may wish to perform prayers at this time, or to share reading the Qur'an with other Muslim pupils.
- ensure that no pupil who is fasting is required to do anything that would make her/him break the fast. This could include swimming, cross-country running, weight-training.
- anticipate that fasting may make some pupils weak or tired, and adapt the curriculum as appropriate. This could mean, for example, planning less energetic activities in P.E
- where possible, use the fact that pupils are fasting to inform and enrich the curriculum experience both for themselves and others. It could be a starting point for discussions in a number of subjects, such as religious education, history, P.E., health education, performing arts, geography and science.

Many older Muslim pupils who are fasting may like to have the opportunity to pray at lunchtime. If schools are to meet this need they will have to:

- provide supervised rooms, one for girls and one for boys if these are not already made available for this purpose throughout the year.
- make available washing facilities and a vessel for washing. Pupils will need to wash their arms and feet which because facilities are not built for this purpose, may lead to a few puddles on the floor which will need to be cleaned up afterwards
- allow pupils to bring prayer mats, and if they wish to, slippers to wear after ablution.



## 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. All Jewish festivals commence at sunset and finish at sunset, some last one day, and most two.

### **Shabbat**

The Jewish Sabbath (from the root of the Hebrew word seventh for the Seventh Day of the Creation) starts on Friday afternoon at sunset and finishes on Saturday at sunset. It is customary for Jews to eat a special meal on Friday night with their extended family regardless of levels of observance.

Many Jewish students and staff will want to leave school early on Friday afternoons in the winter, because Shabbat starts 14 minutes before sunset on Friday, and this can be as early as 3:35 PM. They will need to be home well before this time in order to wash, change and get to the synagogue.

On the Jewish Sabbath and the festivals, it is forbidden to travel, work, cook, operate any machinery, use electricity, answer the telephone, cook or write. A Jewish pupil or member of staff will, therefore, need to leave work early on a Friday afternoon in order to arrive home early to finalise the cooking or heating of the food for the Sabbath, or attend synagogue for the Friday night prayers before sunset as travelling by car, or public transport, cooking, phoning or writing are forbidden after sunset. Jews may also wish to leave early in order to arrive home in time to take children to synagogue for special Friday night classes and services.

Shabbat might also make life difficult for staff or pupils if a school trip is planned over the weekend, since there are many activities which are forbidden on Shabbat.

In addition to Shabbat, such activities are also forbidden on Shavuot, the first two days and last two days of Pesach, the first two days of Sukkot, Simchat Torah and the day preceding it ("Shmini Atseret"), and Yom Kippur.

**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.

During Pesach, there are strict limitations on what Jewish people may eat. Anything which is based on a grain and has undergone a leavening or fermenting process (such as bread, cake, beer, whisky) is forbidden throughout Pesach. Nor may one eat something which has been cooked in a vessel or oven which is normally used for cooking these foods, unless the vessel or oven has been cleaned in a specific way which would be impractical in a school.

**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 Ha'atsma'ut:** "Independence Day" is celebrated by some Jewish people as a religious festival. It marks the anniversary of the founding of the modern state of Israel in May 1948. There are no major religious rituals for the day, but some Jewish people like to celebrate it with parties or by reflecting on the day.

This may cause tension with some other pupils and teachers, particularly Muslims who trace their family origins back to the Middle East. If teachers are aware of this, they will be able to research the issues and address them in a way that minimises conflict.

**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.

There are various other fast days in the Jewish calendar: Tsom Gedaliah (on the day after Rosh Hashanah), Asara b'Tevet (the tenth of Tevet, shortly after Chanukah), Ta'anit Esther (on the day before Purim), and Shiva Asar b'Tammuz (three weeks before Tisha B'Av).

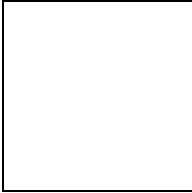


## SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Seventh-day Adventists hold to the major Christian beliefs with a few exceptions. One of the key doctrines that differs from mainstream Christianity is the Judaic Sabbath. Seventh-day Adventists worship on the 7<sup>th</sup> day Saturday, instead of the on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week, Sunday.

The Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday and finishes on sunset on Saturday. During those hours, only humanitarian works or worship is permitted. In addition to this, most Seventh-day Adventists observe Christmas and see it as a family time although most Seventh-day Adventists do not believe that Jesus was born on the 25<sup>th</sup> December. They also celebrate Easter in the Christian calendar.

Many Seventh-day Adventists are vegetarian and although this is not a stipulation or a requirement of the faith, it is seen as beneficial to long-term health. Some Seventh-day Adventists are also vegan. With regards to health, Seventh-day Adventists do not drink alcohol, smoke tobacco, or take drugs.



## Sikhism

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 repair 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.