

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, 20th 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.

From 2nd December 2003, when the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations came into force, it became unlawful to discriminate against workers because of religion or similar belief. This guide aims to raise awareness of employers' responsibilities to employees from all 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 information has been given about the beliefs and practices of a range of faith communities. It is important 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.

Should you require further advice please contact:

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Religious observance – pupils and staff

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.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What do we do about requests for leave for religious observance in term time?

Staff should give as much notice as possible when requesting leave. Employers should be aware that some religious or belief festivals are aligned with lunar phases and therefore dates change from year to year; the dates for some festivals do not become clear until quite close to the actual day. Discussion and flexibility between staff and managers will usually result in a mutually acceptable compromise.

Organisations should take care not to disadvantage those workers who do not hold any specific religion or belief.

Do schools have to provide a prayer room?

Regulations do not say that organisations have to provide a prayer room. However, if employees request access to a quiet place in which to meet their religious obligations and such a place is available without it having any adverse impact on the business or other staff, then employers may be acting in a discriminatory way if they refuse such a request.

How do organisations cater for requests to release staff for prayer outside normal rest/break periods or religious festivals?

Schools should consider applications for leave bearing in mind the following:

- Time off for religious observance can and should be planned in advance.
- Consideration can be given to allow for time off for prayer to be made up through, for example, shorter lunch breaks, or earlier or later working times, bearing in mind the requirements for breaks in the Working Time Regulations/ the exigencies of the service.

In the case of teachers no more than 5 days of paid leave may be granted under this category in

a calendar year in accordance with their terms and conditions. The above is taken from: Haringey LMS Schools Personnel Handbook: Time Off For Religious Festivals Guidance 13.12

Dress & Food

Dress

Many religious and cultural traditions require particular dress, wearing the hair in a certain way, having locks, not cutting the hair, or wearing head coverings e.g. hijabs, turbans and Yarmulke and/or wearing long or modest clothing which covers the body and/or the wearing of particular jewellery like the Sikh Kara, or bracelet. In most cases these should not be in conflict with office dress codes, uniforms, or health and safety, but sensitivity and flexibility should be shown and efforts made to accommodate the wearing of religious dress safely.

If it is practical and safe to do so, staff and pupils may welcome the opportunity to wear clothing consistent with their religion. Where organisations adopt a specific dress code or uniform, careful consideration should be given to the proposed code to ensure it does not conflict with the dress requirements of some religions. General dress codes which have the effect of conflicting with religious requirements may constitute indirect discrimination unless they can be justified for example, on the grounds of health and safety.

Some religions require that women and sometimes men should dress modestly and organisations should consider whether this requirement is contravened by their dress code. For example, Jewish women may wish to wear a shirt or blouse outside their skirt in order to avoid accentuating their body shape. This may also apply to women from other religions. Islamic dress for both sexes should be modest and not tight-fitting, transparent or accentuate the body shape. In practice this means a wide variety of styles can be worn. Boys should always be covered between the navel and knee and girls reveal only their hands and faces.

Provided that Muslim girls are permitted to wear long, loose versions of a school skirt, trousers, long sleeves and a headscarf to cover their hair, they can comply with school uniform as regards colour, fabric etc without problem. The school has a right to expect that Muslim parents provide their children with clothing in a material suitable to the climate of the UK and to see that any headscarf or hijab worn by their daughters can be safely tied for work in the science lab, domestic science or CDT workshops.

If schools have a policy on the wearing of jewellery, having tattoos or other markings, they should try and be flexible and reasonable concerning items of jewellery and markings which are traditional within some religions or beliefs. Unjustifiable policies and rules may constitute indirect discrimination.

There are items of jewellery, which are culturally specific to some religions, for instance Hindu men wear neck beads (Kanthi Mala) which are an indication of their faith. Additionally, some religions are designated by body markings such as a red spot on the forehead (Bindi Sindur) and schools should consider allowing for these within their policies.

Many Muslim children wear Qur'anic verses which may be wrapped or sewn in cloth or contained in small metal boxes or locket worn on a chain or string around the neck or upper arm, or pinned inside clothes. These are religious artefacts and not jewellery.

Frequently Asked Questions:

My organisation has rules on personal appearance and dress. Are we in breach of the legislation?

If your company rules are in place for health and safety reasons or to protect your image with customers they may be lawful. It is important to explain the company's policy on dress and appearance, but organisations should try to be flexible where they can to enable staff to dress in accordance with their beliefs but still meet the organisation's requirements.

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.

Dietary requirements

Some religions or beliefs have specific dietary requirements and therefore needs. Schools will wish to accommodate these needs in order to ensure that pupils and staff belonging to these faiths are able to keep healthy, secure in the fact that they are not compromising their beliefs.

Baha'is do not have specific dietary prohibitions. Some may be vegetarians, but this is of their own choosing, and not a religious requirement. Baha'is do not drink alcohol, except when prescribed by a physician. Smoking is discouraged but not forbidden.

The Baha'i period of fasting is 2nd March – 21st March. It occurs at the same time each year. Baha'is may not take food or drink between sunrise and sunset during this period. Fasting is not obligatory in sickness, pregnancy, menstruation, nursing mothers, people under the age of 15 and over 70.

Many **Buddhists** are vegetarian or vegan. Some may have taken a precept which involves eating only one main meal a day. This is usually eaten before midday.

In some Buddhist traditions on certain days, possibly Full Moon days, fasting may be observed. There are also other festival days such as Buddha's birthday, death day, his enlightenment, the first Sermon and others.

Jehovah's Witnesses, in harmony with their scriptural beliefs (Acts 15:28,29), are required to abstain from eating blood, ie blood sausage, and from animal meat if the blood has not been properly drained. Apart from this there is no restriction on what is to be eaten, and fasting is not carried out.

For **Hindus** Sravan is the month of fasting (July/ August) and some individuals may choose to fast at different times during this month. Many Hindus will refrain from consuming grain.

Amongst Hindus, food and its preparation are linked with concepts of purity and pollution. These in turn are linked with the concept of caste in which the priestly caste (Brahmin) is thought to be the most pure and therefore in most danger of being polluted. In general, Brahmins (of which there are several sub-types) are permitted to eat food that is prepared by the members of their own caste and the untouchables, being the most polluted can eat anything. However these restrictions depend on the orthodoxy of the individual family

Most Hindus, and especially women, are happier with a vegetarian diet although they will eat fish, chicken, lamb or egg dishes. Some may choose not to eat eggs (Vegan). There are no restrictions on how the slaughter has to take place. Dairy products are acceptable so long as they are free of animal fats.

Beef is never eaten as the cow is considered to be a sacred animal and dairy products are considered to be auspicious. In modern times and amongst non-caste Hindus, pork will be taken but this is rare.

Meat or fish or even eggs will not be consumed at all on special days which are dependent on the phases of the moon. Hindus follow a lunar calendar which is different from the Islamic lunar calendar. On such days, there may be restrictions on the type of food eaten, whether it is cooked or not or whether it is prepared in a certain way. At such times, milk and yogurt, fresh fruit and

certain vegetables such as potato or sweet potato may be consumed. Certain foods, such as ~~sago~~ cooked in milk or coconut milk are also permitted.

Jews will only eat meat which is killed and prepared by their own religious-trained personnel (Kosher or permitted). This process ensures that as much blood as possible is drained from the meat before it is prepared and cooked, by soaking and salting it for some time.

Jews who are observant will not take milk and meat in the same meal and will generally wait three hours between these kinds of foods. (Some people wait six hours; others only one). A Jewish household will keep meat and milk utensils, crockery and cutlery rigidly separate.

Orthodox Jews use food which is rabbinically certified to be free of meat or shell-fish derivatives. Many seemingly innocuous items contain meat products, such as rennet in cheese, or gelatine in jellies and yogurts. Many Jews therefore refuse any food which is not certified, including milk and cheese; they will also not regard product labelling as reliable evidence, since often different products are produced using the same equipment.

Most Jews will eat eggs and some fish. Only fish with fins and scales are permitted. There are prohibitions on shellfish and fish without fins and scales, such as eel and shark. However, many religious Jews will simply not eat any food prepared in the school kitchen

Mormons are health-conscious. They are not usually vegetarians but will eat meat sparingly, avoiding products with much blood. There is concern over the effects of stimulants, including caffeine, and Mormons drink neither tea nor coffee. Some will avoid all hot drinks. In schools water, milk or fruit juice will be acceptable. Alcohol and tobacco are forbidden.

Muslims are permitted to eat halal food and drink only. Halal means lawful. Islamic law requires that Allah's name is invoked at the time of slaying of an animal for food. (Note: fish and eggs are Halal). Muslims are not permitted to eat haram food and drink. Haram means unlawful. This includes the meat of animals not slain in the prescribed manner. Other things that are haram are alcohol, pig meat products and lard. The diets of different cultures within Islam vary.

Sikhs do not eat beef, some will eat other meat. Eggs and fish may also be excluded. However Sikhs who have taken the amrit (holy water), have vowed never to touch, cook or eat any kind of meat. They will not eat any food cooked in school as they will only eat food prepared by their own family because they will be sure it will not have been alongside meat of any description. Sikhs do not eat Muslim's Halal meat. Some Sikhs may wish to fast if there is a full moon.

If staff or pupils bring food into school that has been chosen to meet the requirements of their religion, they may need to store and heat this food separately from other food. As an example Muslims and Jews will wish to ensure their food is not in contact with pork or anything that may have been in contact with pork, such as cloths or sponges. These members of the school community would therefore value being able to ensure that their food does not become contaminated by 'unclean' foods or items.

As beliefs and practices vary between and within faith communities it is good practice to consult members of the relevant faith communities on such issues and find a mutually acceptable solution to any dietary problems.

Good Practice Example: A teacher who, for religious reasons, is a vegetarian felt unable to store her lunch in a refrigerator next to the meat sandwiches belonging to a colleague. Following consultation with the staff and their representatives, a policy was introduced that all

food must be stored in sealed containers and shelves were separately designated 'meat' and 'vegetarian'. This arrangement on this occasion met the needs of all staff at no cost to the employer.

Good Practice Example: A school decides to ban all pork products in order to cater for the needs of staff and pupils who are not permitted contact with these for religious reasons. This includes all processed foods and cooking materials.

Employment

From 2 December 2003, when the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations came into force, it became unlawful to discriminate against workers because of religion or similar belief. The regulations also cover providers of vocational training. The Regulations apply to vocational training and all facets of employment – including recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals and training. They make it unlawful on the grounds of religion or belief to:

- discriminate directly against anyone. That is, to treat them less favourably than others because of their religion or belief;
- discriminate indirectly against anyone. That is, to apply a criterion, provision or practice which disadvantages people of a particular religion or belief unless it can be objectively justified;
- subject someone to harassment. Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment having regard to all the circumstances and the perception of the victim;
- victimise someone because they have made or intend to make a complaint or allegation or have given or intend to give evidence in relation to a complaint of discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief;
- discriminate or harass someone in certain circumstances after the working relationship has ended.

Exceptions may be made in very limited circumstances if there is a genuine occupational requirement for the worker to be of a particular religion or belief in order to do the job or to comply with the religious or belief ethos of the organisation.

Religion or belief is defined as being any religion, religious belief or similar philosophical belief. This does not include any philosophical or political belief unless it is similar to religious belief. It will be for the Employment Tribunals and other Courts to decide whether particular circumstances are covered by the regulations.

What do schools as employers need to be aware of?

They should ensure that religion and belief are included in their Equality Policy. It is a good idea to revisit the Equality Policy from time to time to ensure it has not become outdated, to test any new employment policies and procedures for discrimination and to ensure the policy itself meets current legislation requirements.

All staff need to be made aware (through training, notice boards, circulars, contracts of employment etc) that it is not only unacceptable to discriminate, harass or victimise someone on the grounds of religion or belief, it is also unlawful. Organisations should also make it clear that they will not tolerate such behaviour. Staff should know what to do if they believe they have been discriminated against or harassed, or if they believe someone else is being discriminated against or harassed, and this should be included in the grievance procedure.

Organisations should also consider adding all forms of discrimination and harassment (religion or belief, sex, race, disability, gender reassignment and sexual orientation) to their disciplinary

rules which should also include bullying. It is good practice to include age in your policies ahead of age discrimination becoming unlawful in October 2006.

Do the Regulations cover all religions and beliefs?

It is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of religion, religious belief, perceived religion or religious belief, or similar philosophical belief.

It is as unlawful to discriminate against a person for not holding a specific religion or belief as it is to discriminate against someone for actually holding to or subscribing to a particular religion or belief.

The Regulations apply to all workers. They also cover related areas such as membership of trade organisations, the award of qualifications, the services of careers guidance organisations,

employment agencies and vocational training providers, including further and higher education institutions.

The Regulations cover anyone who applies to an organisation for work, or who already works for an organisation whether they are directly employed or work under some other kind of contract or are an agency worker, for example a supply teacher.

Organisations are also responsible for the behaviour of their staff towards an individual working for someone else but on their premises, for example someone from another organisation repairing a piece of equipment.

Workers are sometimes harassed by third parties, such as customers or clients. Where possible, organisations should protect their staff from such harassment and should take steps to deal with actual or potential situations of this kind. This will enhance the organisation's reputation as a good employer and make the organisation a welcoming and safe place to work.

Many organisations provide visitors and visiting workers with guidance on Health and Safety matters. It may be appropriate to include some comments in any policy your organisation has on harassment.

Religion or belief at interviews

Interviews are about finding out whether someone has the right skills for the job. Personal questions about an individual's beliefs should not be asked unless they are relevant to the duties of the job in question. It is good practice not to ask any personal questions at interview unless it is to make sure that appropriate adjustments are made for anyone with a disability.

Organisations do not have to employ people whose beliefs mean they are unable to undertake essential parts of the job. It should be made clear to candidates what type of work the organisation does and what duties the job involves so they can consider whether there is any chance it might conflict with their religion or beliefs.

Good Practice Example: An individual applying for a job as a school kitchen assistant may not be willing to handle pork products for religious reasons. Such products probably represent only a small proportion of the food cooked and served by the school. It may not be reasonable

to reject such job applicants if it is practicable to allocate work in a way that does not involve handling pork products.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Do organisations have to collect data on religion or belief?

The Regulations do not require the collection of such data but it may help organisations to provide appropriate facilities for their staff and to understand employees' needs (e.g. when they might seek discretionary leave). It is important that managers talk to people and/or their trades unions to ensure an understanding of individual needs and to avoid making assumptions about them. Not all followers of each religion or belief will necessarily have the same practices or follow their religion in exactly the same way.

If an organisation decides to collect data, it may give staff added confidence if it is made clear why they want the information, how it is going to be used and that giving such information is entirely voluntary. All such information should be confidential and anonymous. It is designated 'sensitive' under the Data Protection Act 1998. Staff permission should be obtained before using such information.

How will organisations know if they are discriminating inadvertently?

Individual staff, or their trade union, will generally tell managers, particularly if managers are able to create a culture where staff feel comfortable in sharing such information. It can be helpful for organisations to have a designated individual to whom people can go in confidence. It is a good idea for management teams, staff representatives or a specially convened group of employees to think through and test whether any organisational policies and procedures impact on people's religion or belief, or discriminate on any other grounds such as disability, sexual orientation, sex or race. It is good practice to include age in your equality policies ahead of age discrimination becoming unlawful in October 2006.

Organisations should consider carefully whether they are inadvertently discriminating indirectly.

Good practice example: if team meetings always take place on a Friday afternoon this may discriminate against Jewish and Muslim staff for whom Friday afternoon has a particular religious significance, although not everyone follows their faith in the same way. (Nb employers will not escape liability in an Employment Tribunal by showing that discrimination was inadvertent or accidental.) The school reschedules meetings avoiding Friday afternoons.

No one in my organisation has ever complained of discrimination or harassment so we don't need to do anything new, do we?

People do not always feel able or confident enough to complain, particularly if the harasser is a manager or senior executive. Sometimes they will simply resign. One way to find out is to undertake exit interviews when people leave your organisation and as part of that process to ask if they have ever felt harassed, bullied or discriminated against at work. If it is possible, exit interviews should be undertaken by someone out of the individual's line of management.

Discrimination includes harassment, which can take place without management being aware of it. Organisations should make sure all their staff understand that harassment means any unwanted behaviour that makes someone feel either intimidated, humiliated or offended and that includes teasing, tormenting, name calling, etc and applies to whoever the perpetrator may be. The victim's perception of the effect of the behaviour is also important. Managers should take all practical steps to make sure staff understand that organisations and their management teams will

not tolerate such behaviour and that they will deal with whoever is causing the problem through the disciplinary process.

Should we ban discussions about religion and belief in the workplace? We are concerned that someone might complain about harassment.

If harassment has been explained to staff they should be able to distinguish between reasonable discussion and offensive behaviour. Staff should be aware that if their discussions cause offence then this may be considered to be harassment and therefore unlawful. A ban on discussions about religion or belief may create more bad feeling amongst staff and cause more problems than it solves.

I am concerned that, on the grounds of religion, some of my staff may refuse to work with their gay or lesbian colleagues.

Some religions do have strong views concerning sexual orientation but most do not advocate persecution of people because of their sexual orientation. Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace whatever their sex, race, colour, disability, age, religion or sexual orientation. You should include this overriding premise in your Equality Policy and show that you take a robust view when this principle is not adhered to. Your workers do not have to be friends but you can insist that they treat each other professionally.

Our organisation has a religious ethos. How do we determine if a person's religion or belief can be justified as a genuine occupational requirement for a post?

Staff can be recruited on the basis of their religion or belief where this is a genuine occupational requirement for the job. The Regulations require you to consider the nature of the job and the context within which it is carried out when considering whether the job holder needs to practice a specific religion in order to undertake the role within the ethos of the organisation.

When considering applying such a requirement look at each post individually both in terms of the duties of the job and the context within which it is carried out.

Organisations should not expect to apply a blanket requirement to all its posts even if it has a religious ethos.

Organisations should consider whether there are alternatives to applying an occupational requirement. For instance, if only a small part of the job needs someone from that religion then it may be possible to redistribute work or reorganise roles in such a way as to avoid applying a religious requirement to a particular post. Organisations can reasonably expect their staff to keep to their organisational values and culture and should bear in mind that people may be able to maintain those values and culture, and therefore the ethos of the organisation, without actually belonging to the particular religion or belief.

Organisations should be clear about the link between the requirements of the job and the requirement to be of a particular religion or belief as, in the event of an Employment Tribunal claim on the grounds of religious or belief discrimination, the burden of proof will be on the employer to show a genuine occupational requirement. Tribunals tend to interpret such requirements very narrowly since they effectively go against the principle of equal treatment.

A genuine occupational requirement on the grounds of religion or belief should not be used to discriminate on any other grounds such as sex, race or disability; although in some very limited circumstances a religious organisation may lawfully be able to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation or sex.

Some religions require their followers to pray at specific times during the day. How do we cater for this?

Staff may request access to an appropriate quiet place (or prayer room) to undertake their religious observance. Employers are not required to provide a prayer room. However, if a quiet place is available and allowing its use for prayer does not cause problems for other members of the community, schools should agree to the request.

Where possible, it is good employee relations practice for organisations to set aside a quiet room or area for prayer or private contemplation. In consultation with staff, it may be possible

to designate an area for all staff for the specific purpose of prayer or contemplation rather than just a general rest room. Such a room might also be welcomed by those for whom prayer is a religious obligation and also by those who, for example, have suffered a recent bereavement. Organisations should consider providing separate storage facilities for ceremonial objects.

Health Issues

Muslim viewpoint

Islam places great emphasis on cleanliness, in both its physical and spiritual aspects. On the physical side, Islam requires the Muslim to clean his body, his clothes, his house, and the whole community, and he is rewarded by God for doing so. It is therefore important to make sure that a Muslim child is clean because as in the case of many faiths, but Islam in particular, 'cleanliness is next to godliness'.

Hands and arms up to the elbow should be clean before touching the Qur'an, praying or eating. Also face and feet need to be kept clean if at all possible. Opportunities to pray should be made available if required. However, when children are travelling it is understood that prayer times cannot always be strictly observed. Similarly when children are sick they cannot always be as clean as one would wish. Girls generally should not show their legs, arms or uncovered heads and so an awareness of this fact will help to maintain their cultural integrity.

Ointments or medicines should not contain animal fats and should be halal for Muslim children.

During PE or changing sessions the fact that Muslim boys are circumcised may be an issue for other boys and therefore need some explanation.

Sikh viewpoint

The main thing one has to be careful of with Sikh pupils is to be sensitive to the fact that for boys and girls their hair is of utmost importance as it forms one of the 5 K's. Make sure that your hands are clean at all times and do not touch pupils' hair without asking their permission or being sensitive to the fact that it is special.

Jewish viewpoint

For Orthodox Jewish children any ointments or medicines must not contain animal fats and should be kosher. One would not expect to use any medicines that had not been prescribed and passed by a doctor with the parent's approval, but there may be cases when, through lack of careful planning, one would be tempted to use something which could cause offence e.g suntan creams.

Orthodox Jewish girls should be as covered as possible including their heads, while boys wear a white shawl called a 'tzizit' which they wear at all times. During PE or changing sessions the fact that Jewish boys are circumcised may be an issue with other boys and therefore need some explanation.

Buddhist viewpoint

Traditionally all Buddhist boys spend a certain amount of their growing up years in contemplation and study. During this time they have to be clean in physical and spiritual terms. Although cleanliness is always important it is more important at this time for example, they

must not touch a pregnant woman, and possibly be touched by a menstruating woman, even by accident. This would have an impact if one had a child who needed pads changing by female staff or required help with feeding.

Hindu viewpoint

Washing is important in Hindu life, including washing hands and rinsing the mouth before and after meals. Strict cleanliness in handling and preparation of food is observed so Hindus may ask for

food from home for both hygienic and taboo reasons. If Hindu children come into contact with menstruating women it is believed to make that person unclean.

Mormon viewpoint

Those Mormons who have undergone a special Temple ceremony wear a sacred undergarment. This intensely private item will normally be worn at all times, in life and death. It may be removed for hygiene purposes and laundering but it must at all times be considered private and treated with respect.

Handling pupils in school: occasions when it may be necessary to touch learners in school:

- To prevent a child hurting themselves or others it may be necessary to hold on to them. It is vital that this is done in accordance with a strict policy resulting from training in 'restraint' and 'behaviour management'.
- To assist with dressing or undressing if they are unable to do so independently. This may not only be very young children but often older learners who are dyslexic or dyspraxic have difficulty with ordering items of clothing or putting them on in the correct order or manner e.g. back to front.
- To assist in the changing of pads for toileting. Although this is generally the domain of Special Schools it is becoming more and more likely in main stream settings where children with average ability can have physical difficulties.
- To assist in other personal needs e.g. feeding

Good practice principles

- Professionals must always be sure they are acting in an appropriate manner.
- Assisting learners with their personal needs is always going to be a sensitive issue, whatever faith one belongs to.
- It is therefore crucial that we work in line with the agreed Child Protection Policy of the Borough and of the school.
- Never lay yourself open to claims of inappropriate behaviour by not following agreed ways of working.
- For example when dealing with any personal needs it is good practice to have two adults present at all times.
- Do not lock doors and leave yourself alone with a child.
- Modesty and respect for human dignity is common to all faiths and cultures and schools should be aware that when dealing with a student's personal needs staff are proactive about these issues.

The Curriculum

It is important that schools are aware of cultural and religious sensitivities when delivering the National Curriculum. Members of some faiths may have concerns regarding delivery of the national curriculum but in fact the only subjects from which they may withdraw their children are religious education, collective worship and sex education. However there are sometimes ways in which schools can support parents by being aware of concerns and using resources sensitively.

The Qualifications & Curriculum Authority's information about inclusion may be of use to schools when considering positive ways of supporting inclusion through their curriculum offer:

<http://www.qca.org.uk/ages3-14/inclusion/301.html>

The publication "Faith, Values and Sex and Relationships Education", (Blake & Katrik, National Childrens Bureau, 2002) offers an useful overview of six religious and humanist perspectives on topics including puberty, contraception, gender roles and homosexuality together with a framework for inclusive SRE policy development.

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 and relationship education and RE. With regard to sex and relationship education, it is important to note that the biological elements in the National Curriculum Science Order are mandatory for all pupils of primary and secondary age across all key stages. It is therefore important for schools to be clear in their Sex and Relationship policy, which elements are delivered outside the National Curriculum Science Order. This policy should be developed in consultation with all parents to ensure that faith and secular perspectives are included.

There is a useful leaflet for parents on the DfES website, which offers support and advice on this situation: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sreandparents/>

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.

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. Some religions or beliefs do not allow individuals to undress or shower in the company of others. If an organisation requires its staff, for reasons of health and safety, to change their clothing and/or shower, it is good employee relations practice to explore how such needs can be met.

Insistence upon same-sex communal shower and changing facilities could constitute indirect discrimination (or harassment) as it may disadvantage or offend staff or pupils belonging to particular religions or beliefs whose requirement for modesty extend to changing their clothing in the presence of others, even of the same gender. In Islam for example public showering or being naked in front of others is forbidden. Where schools have showers students could shower in their swimming costumes, although the practice of allowing Muslim children to shower in bathing costumes does not solve the problem while other children are naked and in the same communal shower area. Islam forbids undressing in front of others or being among others who are undressed.

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.

How do cater for creationist views in Science lessons?

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.

Supporting the needs of Jehovah's Witness pupils

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.

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.

Good Practice Principles

Considering all of the above, 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.

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 28th 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 29th 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 20th 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 26th 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 23rd 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 9th 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 25th 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).

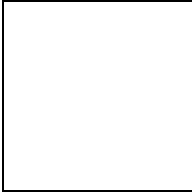


SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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 7th day Saturday, instead of the on the 1st 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 25th 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.