



Tynecastle High School

Religious Observance Policy Statement

Introduction

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

Definition

Religious Observance is defined for schools in Scotland as:

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

Religious Observance Review Group Report

Purpose

Religious Observance will provide experiences which will be meaningful to all students and staff, aiding their spiritual development.

Our school community comprises staff, students and families from a variety of faith backgrounds and worldviews. This diversity will be valued and considered when planning acts of Religious Observance.

Aims

The aims of Religious Observance are defined as:

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

To express and celebrate the shared values of the school community”

Religious Observance Review Group Report

Spiritual Development:

“includes being helped to recognise, reflect upon and develop a deeper understanding of the value and worth of each individual which comes from one's dignity as a person.”

Religious Observance Review Group Report

A Curriculum for Excellence encourages each individual within a school community to develop as “a successful learner, confident individual, responsible citizen and effective contributor”.

To further these aims, Tynecastle High School will therefore plan:

- to allow students and staff to engage in shared activities reflecting and expressing their spiritual needs and aspirations
- to celebrate important occasions in the life of the school and the community
- to involve students and staff in experiences which stimulate, challenge and extend their capacities for spiritual response to the world in which they live.

Withdrawal

Under the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, parents / carers have the right to ask for their child to be withdrawn from Religious Observance. The school will deal with such requests with sensitivity and understanding. The head teacher will offer to meet with any parent wishing to withdraw their child to ensure that they are clear about the school policy on Religious Observance.

In particular, parents / carers should be reassured that the Religious Observance planned by our school adopts an open and respectful approach and does not seek to compromise the beliefs of any students or their families.

Where a child is withdrawn from Religious Observance, suitable arrangements will be made for the student to participate in a worthwhile alternative activity.

Frequency

Tynecastle High School will follow the City of Edinburgh authority’s policy of a minimum of 6 religious observance opportunities per year for each student.

Quality

We intend to provide Religious Observance events of high quality which will further the aims of Religious Observance.

The Religious Observance Team

The school will appoint a group to supervise Religious Observance under the direction of the head teacher. This team will be drawn from a range of people - members of staff, students, members of the chaplaincy team and from a range of traditions in order to plan acts of religious observance.

Organisation

The Head Teacher, in consultation with our school’s Religious Observance Team, will draw up a programme for Religious Observance.

It is appreciated that within any school programme students will assemble for a range of reasons. A clear distinction will be maintained between Religious Observance assemblies and assemblies for other purposes. Religious Observance assemblies or events will be devised which allow all members of the school community to participate with integrity.

Evaluation

Regular evaluation of the Religious Observance programme and the quality of religious observance events will take place under the direction of the head teacher or person nominated by the head teacher.

The School Chaplain or Chaplaincy Team

In line with City of Edinburgh Council policy, Head teachers are encouraged to appoint a chaplain or chaplaincy team.

The role of the chaplain or chaplaincy team will be fully discussed and regularly evaluated in discussion between staff and the chaplain(s).

The role of the chaplain or chaplaincy team includes:

- being a member of the Religious Observance Team
- being a resource for the RME curriculum
- providing pastoral care for staff and students (and if appropriate, their families)
- being available at community events in the life of the school
- having a key role at times of extreme difficulty
- provide a bridge and common resource across the cluster

Location

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

Resources

Education Scotland provides website based guidance, exemplars and evaluative tools for schools. However, it remains the responsibility of our school staff to develop our own resources to meet the specific needs of our school community.

Worship

The following extract from the Scottish Government's letter of February 2011 will be considered when planning Religious Observance events:

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

“ Where, as in most non-denominational schools, there is a diversity of beliefs and practices, the review group believes that the appropriate context for an organised act of worship is within the informal curriculum as part of the range of activities offered for example by religions, groups, chaplains and other religious leaders.”¹

Tynecastle High School will consider positively requests by members of the school community for organised acts of worship within the informal curriculum of the school.

Diversity & Flexibility

Tynecastle High School will develop Religious Observance in a creative way which is most appropriate to our school community. Our Religious Observance opportunities will be referred to as 'Time for Reflection'.
