



Framework for Religious Observance within the statutory School Calendar

Background

This briefing note is intended to provide schools with the flexibility to recognize and observe religious festivals other than those recognised within the school calendar where large numbers of parents, pupils and staff wish to take time off school whilst providing the full statutory number of days education. This guidance is not intended to be prescriptive and enables schools to consider their own circumstances. There are however specific statutory requirements that must be delivered.

When considering whether to close the school for religious observance the school must make a balanced assessment of the potential impact on the whole school population, especially for those pupils and parents that may not be of the religion for which the festival is relevant.

The School Calendar

The City Council sets the school calendar for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools under Section 32 of the Education Act 2002. Schools that are their own Admission Authority are free to set their own calendar.

All schools must provide 190 days education in the school year. In addition there are also 5 professional development days which schools can schedule as full days or disaggregate them to twilight sessions.

The Calendar that is agreed by the Local Authority ensures that there are 190 teaching days in the school year.

Exceptions to the Published School Calendar

If any school wishes to close for religious observance on a day that is identified as a normal school day it must ensure that the following actions are carried out:

1. Parents and staff are fully consulted in good time in case alternative child care arrangements have to be made.
2. If any day or days that the school is closed for religious observance are not taken as professional development days, they must be made up elsewhere in the school calendar to ensure that 190 teaching days are provided.

3. If any day or days that the school is closed for religious observance are taken as professional development days, this time must be made up to ensure that the 5 days requirement is met.
4. Time off arrangements for both teaching and support staff in the school are granted fairly in accordance with the school's policy for granting time off for religious observance. Please refer to the model policy available from the Schools Human Resources Team.