

Aim

Hartwell Primary School is inclusive of all the religions represented within the school community and will take reasonable steps to ensure school events do not coincide with days of significant religious importance to pupils.

Principles

The Department of Education is clear that schools are obliged to treat absence due to religious observance as authorised. However, “the day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong”.

Hartwell Primary School acknowledges that religious festivals may occur outside of school holidays or weekends, which makes it necessary to consider authorised absence for religious observance. The school will use their discretion where a parent does not belong to a religious body but may want to celebrate an alternative festival of importance to them.

Schools' responsibilities

- Hartwell Primary School will be sensitive to requests from parents/pupils for absence due to religious reasons.
- Pupils are permitted to have an authorised absence if the religious observance or festival is a compulsory part of their faith.

This includes:

- o 1 day for Eid ul Adha and Eid ul Fitr (Islam).
 - o 1 day for Diwali (Sikhism and Hinduism).
 - o 1 day for Shavuot, Passover and Rosh Hashanah (Judaism).
- Hartwell Primary School will use their discretion to award absence requests for days in addition to those mentioned above. These requests will be dealt with as an ordinary absence request and not as an absence for religious observance.
 - The Head Teacher is responsible for ensuring that requests are reasonable and genuine. The Head Teacher will not doubt a request on the following grounds:
 - o Other pupils of the same faith have not requested absence on the same day or time.
 - o The pupil's family is more stringent in its religious observances than other families of the same faith.
 - o The religious group to which the family belongs requires observance of religious practices that are altered for different members of the community. (For example, a special day to worship a saint or religious rituals related to the death anniversary of a family member).
 - Hartwell Primary School will strive to take advice from the parents' religious bodies on the number of days assigned to religious observances.
 - Hartwell Primary School will strive to construct positive relationships with local places of worship/religious leaders to establish the appropriate number of days required for religious festivals.

- Should a family wish to apply for leave of absence for religious reasons, an absence request form should be collected from the school office.
- Hartwell Primary School does not consider cultural events as religious observances so if a pupil does not attend school, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Parents' responsibilities

- It is the duty of the parent to ensure that their child attends school regularly.
- Parents should consider whether the absence for religious purposes is necessary, or whether the religious duty may be accommodated outside of school hours.
- Parents need to be aware that the school is required to know of particular needs with regard to the religious observance of pupils, e.g. pupils who are fasting or those involved in exceptional religious activity outside of working hours.
- Parents must inform the school in advance if absence is required for days of religious observance.
- Parents must be willing to discuss with the school how the pupil can catch up on missed work.