

# Sunnyside Primary School: Religious Observance Policy



May 2019

## **Introduction**

In accordance with the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and the advice contained in the Scottish Government's letter of February 2011 it is the policy of the authority and the 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 pupils and staff, aiding their spiritual development.

The school community comprises staff, pupils and families from a variety of 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*

To further these aims, the school will therefore plan:

- To allow pupils 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; and
- To involve pupils 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Under the terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, parents have the right to ask for their child to be withdrawn from religious observance.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 should be reassured that the religious observance planned by the school adopts an open and respectful approach and does not seek to compromise the beliefs of any pupils or their families.

Where a child is withdrawn from religious observance, suitable arrangements will be made for the pupil to participate in a worthwhile alternative activity.

## **Frequency**

The school will follow the guidelines of a minimum of six religious observance opportunities per year for each pupil.

## **Quality**

The school intends to provide religious observance events of high quality which will further the aims of these community acts, as defined above.

## **Organisation**

The head teacher; in consultation with stakeholders, will draw up a programme for religious observance.

It is appreciated that within the school programme pupils 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. Plans of the content of the six opportunities will be shared with the school community on the school website at the start of the session.

## **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 quality of religious observance may also be subject to external evaluation by officers of the authority or HMI inspectors.

## **Location**

Consideration will be given to providing the most appropriate high quality location for religious observance events in the school to 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 the school staff to develop their own resources to meet the specific needs of their school community.

## **Diversity & Flexibility**

The school will develop religious observance in a creative way which is most appropriate to this 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 denominations or non-denomination, is contiguous 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.”*

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

Sunnyside Primary School’s...

## **Religious Observance Programme**

Religious observance at Sunnyside Primary School will provide experiences which will be meaningful to all pupils and staff, aiding their spiritual development.

The school community comprises staff, pupils and families from a variety of world views. This diversity will be valued and considered when planning acts of religious observance. To further these aims, the school will therefore plan:

- to allow all pupils 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 pupils and staff in experiences which stimulate, challenge and extend their capacities for spiritual response to the world in which they live.



Religious Observance Programme 2019/20

23<sup>rd</sup> August 2019: New Beginnings

We will be looking at how new beginnings are celebrated throughout the world, starting first in Scotland. We will look at celebrations which happen at different times of the year. Pupils will have a chance to reflect on how they feel about new situations (new class, new teacher, new school etc.) and how others may feel.

20<sup>th</sup> September 2019: Community

We will be looking at the community around us, within the school and also out with. We will explore what happens in our community and why it is important for us to be have a positive effect within it. We will look at how we can improve our community and how we can help. This will be linked to Harvest Collection, which the Pupil Council will organise.

8<sup>th</sup> November 2019: Remembrance

We will be learning about Remembrance Day and understanding the importance of remembering the brave men and women who died in the First World War, the Second World War and all other wars. We will consider that wars are still ongoing and that individuals and still losing their lives to support our country's aims and beliefs.

20<sup>th</sup> December 2019: Christmas Celebration

Our Christmas Reflection will be on what Christmas is for Christians and looking at family, fun and faith. As well as or Christmas assembly we will have nativity performances at Nursery and Infant stages alongside class activities.

3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020: Easter Celebration

Our Easter Reflection will consider what Jesus' death and resurrection means for Christians and how this can be related to our current lives. This will be followed up with class activities

19<sup>th</sup> June 2020: Achievements

We will look at how well we have done over the past year. Looking at the achievements, big or small, in school or out of school, and how that made us feel. We will be able to share some of our successes with the school. There will be a 'Thanks' portion of the assembly as well.