




Bexhill
Academy



Religious Observances Policy - staff July 2025-2026

Approved by Trust Board:
Adopted: July 2025
Next Review: July 2026
Reviewed by: T Hillman

Date	Changes	Page number
15 th July 2025	Change “Co-Principals” to “Head Teacher”	All pages

Religious Observances

July 2025

Bexhill Academy commits to affording all employees equal opportunity and ensures that all employees will not receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of religion or belief.

Bexhill Academy celebrates and values the diversity brought to its workforce through individuals, and aims to create an environment where the cultural, religious and non-religious beliefs of all its employees are respected.

The policy is based on the principle that people have the right to their own belief system or not to subscribe to any religion but not to engage in activities or acts that result in the destruction of the rights of others.

Recognising and celebrating diversity helps to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Recruit and retain applicants and employees from all communities
- Provide better services to our diverse communities through understanding, awareness and appreciation of the needs of those communities

The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations provide protection against discrimination within employment. This legislation therefore imposes a legal obligation to back up Bexhill Academy's stated aim of not discriminating on these grounds.

The Regulations do not explicitly define religion or belief. Employment Tribunals or Courts, that are called on to decide on what constitutes a religion or belief where the issue is disputed, are likely to consider such factors as collective worship, a clear belief system and a profound belief affecting a person's way of life or view of the world.

The main religions and faiths Bexhill Academy consider will be covered by the Regulations and in keeping with the current workforce include:

- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism

The Head Teacher should consider what flexible working arrangements they could operate within Bexhill Academy to allow employees to observe their religious beliefs. It is a principle of this policy that the Head Teacher needs to create a culture within their organisation that is sensitive and sympathetic to those employees who may take up these options to observe their religious beliefs. The following sections of this policy set out advice on some of the key considerations in promoting cultural and religious observance at work and the options available to the Head Teacher to support their members of staff.

The Head Teacher is required to be flexible and sympathetic to religious and cultural needs. Employees also are expected to make reasonable and early requests for support in meeting their needs.

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

PRAYER

The Head Teacher should make every attempt to ensure that those employees whose religion or belief requires them to pray at certain times of the day are free to do so using the Trust policy for flexible working, annual leave or unpaid leave. It may not be possible to grant requests for time away from work in every circumstance due to the organisational needs, however, where it is not possible to accommodate such requests the Head Teacher must have a legitimate business reason and every effort must first have been made to find some means of accommodating the request.

Where employees need to take a substantial amount of time to attend prayers or where the required time is less than half a day, the Head Teacher may consider requests to work back these hours.

Bexhill Academy will consider identifying quiet areas or rooms where prayer or contemplation during the day can take place, without adversely affecting other employees. For example, designating meeting rooms as being available for observance at certain times of the day in accordance with the needs of employees in the building.

The timing of key meetings should take account of the attendees' religious needs. For example, regular meetings on a Friday afternoon may inadvertently disadvantage Jewish and Muslim staff.

CHANGING AND WASHING FACILITIES

Some beliefs may require employees to wash or change their clothing at work before prayer. Bexhill Academy will consider ways to assist employees to meet the ritual requirements of their religion and put measures in place, where possible.

WORKING TIME AND OVERTIME

Where a job requires an employee to work hours that impact on their religious needs reasonable adjustments will be considered balanced against the service delivery requirements placed on the organisation.

Working patterns will be clearly explained to any interviewees during the recruitment process.

Any planned or unplanned overtime should consider those employees who do not work beyond sunset on Friday or weekend working which may be work times when their religious beliefs forbid them to do so. For example, Jewish employees. In these circumstances' employees shall not be forced or pressured to work at these times.

LEAVE FOR RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

Individuals may request time off for specific religious festivals. There are no provisions in the Regulations for additional time to be granted in such circumstances; therefore, employees must request unpaid leave, or annual leave if appropriate, at these times. Such requests will be considered sympathetically by the academy.

For some Muslim holy days, the precise timing can only be fixed a few days or the night before the actual event. For example, on the confirmed sighting of the moon. The sighting of the moon is currently confirmed by mosques locally. This can mean that different communities observe the same festival on different days.

The Head Teacher should initially consider those employees who express a preference to provide cover (where cover is required) over religious holiday periods because they do not coincide with observance of their own faith. This would be subject to the employee having the necessary skills to carry out such work, the impact the change will have on students, the availability of the site location, employee safety and site security.

EXTENDED LEAVE

Any requests for extended leave to go on a pilgrimage or for leave to travel abroad for births, weddings or deaths will be dealt with sympathetically. If the extended leave exceeds the employee's holiday entitlement, then unpaid leave may be made available to facilitate the break.

DRESS CODE

Where employees are asked to adhere to the academy's dress code (see Code of Conduct Policy) careful consideration will be taken of dress requirements in relation to religion/ belief. Bexhill Academy will apply flexibility in relation to requests to adapt dress codes.

The only exception to this is where health and safety requirements may mean that for certain tasks, specific items of clothing such as protective clothing need to be worn or the wearing of certain jewellery presents a health and safety risk.

DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Some religions observe dietary restrictions (for example, vegan, vegetarian, kosher, halal etc.). When providing hospitality at training courses or events, consideration will be given to different dietary needs in advance to ensure that these requests are catered for.

Bexhill Academy recognises that it is good practice to present food in separate trays/plates according to it being vegan, vegetarian, fish, halal/kosher and other meat. Placing different types of food on one plate, from which people can make their own choices, may be seen as offensive.

The Head Teacher will ensure that whoever provides the catering labels and plates the food accordingly thereby avoiding confusion over the suitability of the refreshments.

Some employees will not attend social functions or meetings where alcohol is being served. In addition, when organising social events Bexhill Academy should try to be as inclusive as possible, bearing in mind the cultural and religious diversity within the workforce.

Where employees bring food into the workplace, they may need to store and heat this in line with dietary requirements for example, Muslims and Jewish employees will wish to ensure that their food does not meet pork and non-Halal food and vegetarians may wish to ensure their food is kept away from all meat.

Employees need to be sensitive to these needs for example, where possible separate shelves in fridges should be utilised.

FASTING

Some religions require individuals to fast at various times of the year, and the Head Teacher need to be aware of the significance of this to individual employees. The Head Teacher and employees will make every attempt to be sympathetic during this time.

CULTURAL ISSUES

GENERAL

Employees should be respectful of each other's cultural backgrounds and should not judge the behaviour of others in terms of a particular cultural "norm" or standard.

Bexhill Academy, when producing communications that refer to religious or cultural celebrations will avoid abbreviating the full names of such celebrations, for example, by referring to Christmas. Bexhill Academy recognises that abbreviating the full title can cause offence to those who practice the related faith.

OFFENSIVE ACTIONS OR BEHAVIOUR

Any behaviour or actions taken in breach of this policy will be dealt with under Bexhill Academy's Disciplinary Policy.

Any attempt at coercing or threatening others to comply with a particular belief system for example, through threats or offensive remark, may also result in disciplinary action.

Bexhill Academy seeks to address mistreatment in the workplace, including harassment/bullying on religious and cultural grounds, and employees have the right to pursue concern.

This policy links with our policies on:

- Equality
- Disciplinary
- Staff Code of Conduct