

HIGHGATE SCHOOL

Guidance for Parents on Religious Character, Education, Services and Attendance

Aims and Ethos

We aim to conduct Highgate School in a manner consistent with Christian values and reflecting and celebrating the diversity of modern London.

We aim to foster open-mindedness and thoughtfulness in our pupils and our School.

(From the Statement of Aims and Ethos)

Religious Heritage and Tradition

Highgate School has had a Christian (Church of England) tradition since its foundation in 1565 under a Royal Charter of Queen Elizabeth the First. In that year the Bishop of London, Edmund Grindal, granted the School land which we still occupy, including the site of the present Chapel where a place of worship has stood since at least the thirteenth century. Local road names such as Bishopswood Road and Bishop's Avenue are a reminder that much of the manor of Haringaye (old spelling) was owned by the Bishop from the time of the Conquest. To this day the Bishop of London nominates one of the Governors of the School.

Although not a faith school in the modern sense, Highgate is committed to maintaining the values of its Christian tradition and the School is in practice conducted in a way consistent with them. However, as strong a tradition as our Foundation as a Church of England School is the long-established welcome Highgate has extended to very significant number of pupils of other faiths (and of none) where families are happy and able to accept the benefits and obligations required of a Highgate pupil.

Religious Education

Our schemes of work "reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian, but include teaching from other principal world religions represented in Britain" (Education Reform Act 1988). We aim to help pupils to achieve a personal awareness of God, to identify important characteristics of the principal world religions and to develop knowledge and understanding of religious experience, insights, practices and beliefs. They will thus be able to continue in, or come to, their own beliefs and respect the right of others to hold beliefs different from their own.

Assemblies and Religious Services

In the **Pre-Preparatory School** pupils attend a regular brief assembly, which may include a hymn, a prayer or a Bible story as well as a more general moral or religious element. The major festivals of all the major religions are explained and marked. In the **Junior School** the assembly arrangements are similar and three times a year there is a religious service (Harvest, Carol Service and before Easter). All pupils are expected to attend but it is understood that a number will wish to be quiet and respectful observers rather than active participants. The Chaplain frequently leads assemblies as well as religious services.

In the **Senior School**, the pattern for Years 7 and 8 is broadly similar, but one assembly (led by the Chaplain or an invited speaker) takes place in the Chapel and another in the Dyne House Auditorium; the former will usually include a hymn, prayer and a short address where the latter will have a general moral message. In Years 9 – 13, most pupils also attend Chapel once a week in their houses. On these occasions, at the same time, there is a Jewish Circle and (for those who are of a religion other than Christian or Jewish) a Dyne House Assembly. The Jewish Circle has been active for over seventy years, dating back to the war-time evacuation of the Senior School to Westward Ho!: meetings, arranged by pupil officers, are conducted by visitors from Jewish organisations or a visiting Rabbi, assisted by pupils. Twice a term there is, as in the Junior School, a special school service in St Michael's Church and on these occasions Jewish Circle and Dyne House Assembly also meet; sometimes separate services for Roman Catholics and Greek Orthodox take place. Years 7 and 8 attend St Michael's.

Voluntary services are held on some Sunday evenings and certain other special occasions (Ash Wednesday, St Michael's, Easter, Ascension and All Souls, Christmas). Pupils who wish to be are prepared for confirmation in the Church of England.

The School Chaplain, the Reverend Paul Knight, is a Church of England Minister, and he exercises a much valued pastoral and counselling ministry for all pupils and throughout all parts of the School community.

Attendance

Pupils in all years need to be willing and able to participate fully in the lessons and activities of the School. In Junior and Senior School these include regular Saturday sports fixtures and occasional commitments (clubs and rehearsals) after School on Fridays. We are happy to authorise absence from School for the following festivals when in term time: the two days of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and the appropriate days of Passover, the two days of Eid and Guru Nanak's birthday. Arrangements are made for pupils to say prayers during the day and support is offered to pupils during periods of fasting. Parents are required to notify the school in advance of any decision to take religious holidays.

General

The Chaplain and the Director of Admissions are happy to answer questions which families may have; please email at: admissions@highgateschool.org.uk.

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