



Prayer Policy

July 2018

Organised prayer in the school setting, whether in the classroom or at a school-sponsored event, should not take place unless in accordance with the collective worship policy, however Waverley School strongly enforces and promotes equality. It recognises that our students and staff are from many different cultures and faiths. There may be occasions on which a whole school prayer is appropriate, for example, Remembrance Day, to mourn the loss of a staff member or student or a major catastrophe e.g. earthquake disaster. It is important that students and staff ensure the values of humanity and our role and responsibility in society during such times.

The only type of prayer, beyond that stated above, that is permissible is private, voluntary student prayer that does not interfere with the school's educational mission or curriculum.

May students pray? Students have the right to engage in voluntary individual prayer that is not coercive and does not substantially disrupt the school's educational mission and activities. For example, all students have the right to say a blessing before eating a meal. However, staff must not promote or encourage a student's personal prayer. Students may engage with other students in religious activity during non-curricular periods as long as the activity is not coercive or disruptive. In addition, while students may speak about religious topics with their peers, school staff should intercede if such discussions become religious harassment. It is essential that private religious activity does not materially disrupt the school's educational mission and activities. Personal religious activity may not interfere with the rights or well-being of other students and the threat of student harassment and pressure must be carefully monitored. It is also critical to ensure that the religious activity is actually student-initiated.

The Trust in order to support the spiritual well-being of all our students and staff will accommodate requests from students for private prayer. This applies to all faiths and those with none. Such activities should only take place either during non-structured time such as break or lunch or after school. The school will make available a suitable space though this may change dependant on needs, e.g. where there is a need to use the space for curricular activities or examinations. Alternative venues will be provided which can be supervised to ensure the safety and security of all students.

For some faiths and where there is a large student population there may be greater numbers of students who wish to pray. In order to ensure the safety and safeguarding of students staff should support supervision. There may be occasions when staff themselves pray whilst undertaking supervision. Any school promotion or endorsement of a student's private religious activity is not acceptable.

Many of our students are from a Muslim background and students are permitted to say prayer as stated above. However an important prayer is the Friday Prayer, this should be led by students or appropriate staff, the actual act of prayer is in Arabic as it is a recitation of verses of the Quran. Any sermon for Friday prayer or for prayer led for any other religious community should endorse the Trust and British Values; this should be monitored by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Head of School/ Executive Principal to ensure that all students are safe from radicalisation. This approach supports the spiritual well-being of our students as well as attendance. Any sermon delivered for any faith should be in English to enable everyone to understand. In addition at the end of Muslim Prayer a 'Dua' (a short prayer with thanks) is said, this usually has a thanks or remembrance or wish for help or support for some aspect of life followed by recitation of a verse from the Quran) the message in the Dua should be delivered in English.

There may be occasions when a parent makes a special request; these should be in accordance with our policy. It is recognised that there may be special occasions for an absence in some faiths or support for a child e.g. in preparation for communion. A Priest may wish to come and support a child in school for this important event. The school should ensure that all safeguarding checks are carried out as is the case for any visitor in school.

Are vocal prayer and reading from religious scriptures in the classroom permitted? Vocal denominational or nondenominational prayer and ceremonial reading from religious scriptures are not appropriate practices in the classroom. It is irrelevant if the prayer or reading is voluntary. It is accepted that during SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural) and Religious education lessons references may be discussed as part of the curriculum. Student volunteers are prohibited from broadcasting prayers over a school intercom system into the classroom.

Can a school require a moment of silence in the classroom? On occasions such as Remembrance or remembering those that may have passed away, the school may use silence to enable everyone to show respect and reflect. This is not considered a religious act.

Waverley

Adopted by the Board of Waverley Education Foundation on: ____/____/____

Signed: _____
Executive Principal / Principal

Signed: _____
Chair of Waverley Education Foundation