



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

School attendance and religious festivals guidance 2020

School attendance and religious festivals guidance 2020

Audience

The entire teaching workforce, government and national partners, including regional education consortia, local authorities and governing bodies.

Action required

None – for information only.

Further information

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Additional copies

This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at:

<https://beta.gov.wales/school-attendance-and-religious-festivals-guidance>

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.



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Welsh Government attendance guidance

This document provides overarching guidelines, which head teachers may use in determining whether to grant an authorised absence for religious observance for learners.

Parents and carers are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. Only head teachers, and not parents or carers, can authorise an absence. Schools must consider whether the reason for absence is reasonable before doing so.

In Wales, the pattern of the school year takes account of most of the western Christian festivals and holy days. Important days of religious observance in the calendars of other religious traditions and denominations, however, often fall in term time and specifically on school days.

[The Welsh Government guidance](#) on attendance, registration practices and codes can be found [at](#):

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/pupilsupport/framework/?lang=en>

The following advice is provided for religious observance:

Brief Description	Religious observance
Statistical Meaning	Authorised absence
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
Legal Meaning	Absent
Use	Absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong, including religious festivals. Parents [or carers] should be encouraged to give advance notice.

This is interpreted to mean that if the parent or carer's religious organisation sets the day as a religious festival then the school must authorise the absence.

If the religious body has not set the day apart there is no requirement for the school to approve the absence. Additional holidays and days off linked to the religious festival but not "exclusively set aside for religious observance" by the religious body are not marked using Code R.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with [the Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2010](#).

Days of religious observance 2020

The following table **only** includes dates set aside for religious observance for 2020, which fall on a standard school day (i.e. Monday to Friday including school holidays). Other dates acknowledged as dates set aside for religious observance for 2020, which fall over a weekend are not included in the below table but, for reference, are included in Annex 1

	Spring Term 2020	Summer Term 2020	Autumn Term 2020
Baha'i	<p>Naw Rûz – 20/03/2020</p> <p>First day of Ridvan – 20/04/2020</p>	<p>Ninth day of Ridavn – 28/04/2020</p> <p>Twelfth/ Last day of Ridvan – 01/05/2020</p> <p>Ascension of Baha'u'llah - 28/05/2020</p> <p>Martyrdom of the Báb – 09/07/2020</p>	<p>Birth of Baha'u'llah – 19/10/2020</p>
Buddhism	<p>Chinese New Year – 05/02/2020</p> <p>Losar (Tibetan New Year) – 24/02 – 26/02/2020</p>	<p>Visakha Puja / Buddha Day – 06/05/2020</p>	
Christianity	<p>Orthodox Christmas day – 07/01/2020</p> <p>Orthodox Good Friday – 10/04/2020</p>		<p>Christmas Day – 25/12/2020</p>

Hinduism	Vasant Panchami - 29/01/2020 Maha Shivarati – 21/02/2020 Holi – 10/03/2020 Ramnavami – 02/04/2020 Hunuman Jayanti – 08/04/2020	Krishna Janmashtami – 11/08/2020	Vikram New Year – 16/10/2020 Navatri – 17/10/2020 – 24/10/2020
Islam / Muslim		<i>Ramadan – 24/04/2020 –</i> <i>23/05/2020</i> Eid-al-Adha – 31/07/2020 Muharram/ Hijra/ Islamic New Year – 20/08/2020	Mawlid an Nabi/ Eid Milad un-Nabi/ Prophet's Birthday – 29/10/2020
Jainism	Mahavir Jayanti – 06/04/2020	Paryushana Parva – 15/08/2020 – 22/08/2020	
Judaism	Purim – 10/03/2020 Pesach / Passover – 08/04/2020 – 16/04/2020	Tish'a'B'av – 30/07/2020	Rosh Hashanah - 18/09/2020 – 20/09/2020 Yom Kippur – 28/09/2020 Sukkot – 03/10/2020 –

			09/10/2020
Sikhism	Vaisakhi / Khalsa Divas – 14/04/2020 Holi - 10/03/2020 Hola Mohalla – 17/03/2020	Shaheedipurb of Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji – 16/06/2020	First Parkashpurb of Sri Guru Granth Sahib – 20/10/2020 Martydom of Sri Guru Teg Bahadur – 24/11/2020 Guru Nanak Parkash Divas – 30/11/2020

Additional useful information

There are many different kinds of calendars being actively used around the world; they generally fall into three categories:

- The **solar** calendar is concerned with the Sun, or, more precisely, is based on the Earth's rotation around the Sun. The Gregorian calendar, which is the most widely used calendar in the world today is a solar calendar based on a 365-day¹ common year divided into twelve months of irregular lengths.
- **Lunar**² calendars are based on the rotation of the Moon around Earth and are used mainly for religious and cultural purposes,
- **Lunisolar or solilunar** calendars combine the two kinds and are solar calendars with dates indicating the Moon phase. They are used mainly for religious and cultural purposes.

For this reason dates set aside for religious observance in some religions may vary geographically and year on year.

¹ However, nearly every four years is a leap year, when one extra – or intercalary – day, is added on 29 February, making the leap year in the Gregorian calendar 366 days long.

² Dates may vary as a lunar month can be 29 or 30 days long

Dates set aside for religious observance, which fall on a weekend in 2020

	Spring Term 2020	Summer Term 2020	Autumn Term 2020
Baha'i		Declaration of the Báb – 23/05/2020	Birth of the Báb – 18/10/2020
Buddhism			
Christianity			
Hinduism		Ganesh Chaturthi / Vinayaka Chaturthi – 22/08/2020	Diwali – 14/11/2020 Navatri – 17/10/2020 – 24/10/2020
Islam / Muslim		Ramadan – 24/04/2020 – 23/05/2020 Ashura – 29/08/2020	
Jainism		Paryushana Parva – 15/08/2020 – 22/08/2020	Jain New Year- 15/11/2020
Judaism	Pesach / Passover – 08/04/2020 – 16/04/2020	Shavout - 30/05/2020	Diwali – 14/11/2020 Rosh Hashanah - 18/09/2020 – 20/09/2020 Sukkot – 03/10/2020 –

			09/10/2020 Shemni Atzeret - 10/10/2020 Simchat Torah – 11/10/2020
Sikhism	Guru Gobind Singh Birthday – 05/01/2020		Bandi Chhor Divas / Diwali – 14/11/2020

Wales Association Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (WASACRE)

The Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACREs) of all 22 Local Authorities in Wales are members of the Wales Association of SACREs (WASACRE).

The Welsh Government supports the following WASACRE advice:

- Any application made by a parent for their child to receive an authorised absence for religious observance is treated with sensitivity and considered carefully and fairly
- Absence should only be authorised for a date '*exclusively set apart by the religious body*' as detailed above
- If a date has not been '*exclusively set apart*' by the relevant religious body, it is suggested that the head teacher enquires whether the learner/s can fulfil their religious observance outside of school hours
- If a festival falls on a weekend or during a school holiday, absence taken on a school day for that festival would not be authorised
- Similarly, absence taken on a school day either side of a festival that has been '*exclusively set apart*' by the relevant religious body would not be authorised

It is important to note that within some religious traditions, observance varies between different denominations and communities. Whilst one festival might be considered relatively minor within a particular community, therefore not requiring absence from school, the same festival may be celebrated as a holy day of major significance within a different community from the same religious tradition and might require, with authorisation, absence from school. Also, the level of observance will differ amongst families within the same religious tradition or community and some children, despite growing up within a particular faith community, might prefer to attend school on festival days, whilst others may not. Therefore, whilst head teachers must ensure that requests are genuine and reasonable, they are advised not to doubt a request on these grounds.

Furthermore, in terms of the lunar nature of Islamic months and the different authorities that Muslims rely on for the announcement of the start and end of Ramadhan, means that there is the potential for Muslim learners in the same school to start/ finish the fasting month and celebrate Eid a day previous or after each other. In practical terms, this means that Muslim learners in the same school may also be requesting absence for the Eid day on different dates.

Head teachers should also be mindful that the nature of the moon-sighting means that it is only the night before Eid that Muslim families may know that Eid is the following day. As such, parents and carers may be able to give advance notice to school of the approximate dates of Ramadhan (in particular), but stress that it may differ by a day either side of the dates appearing in this guidance.

WASACRE best practice advice

WASACRE would consider it good practice for schools to:

- Encourage parents and carers to give the school as much notice as possible of a proposed absence and be willing to discuss with the teachers how their child/children will catch up on work missed
- To make appropriate provision for the needs of religiously observant children who will be required to perform specific rituals on a regular basis throughout the year. For example, by allocating a prayer room, or a quiet place. There may also be need for some children to have access to a private washing facility, and having these facilities in school would enable children to remain on school site without the need of regular absence
- Reach out to their local religious communities and to remain in regular contact and dialogue with them throughout the year. This will enable schools to develop mutually beneficial relationships with local faith communities that will promote and open up opportunities for good quality learning experiences for the children and support head teachers in determining whether to grant an authorised absence for religious observance for learners in their school
- Be aware of the religious communities represented in their locality and take reasonable steps to ensure, whenever possible, that events in the school diary do not clash with days of significant religious importance for their learners and their families.

Useful Websites:

www.when-is.com

https://www.chabad.org/holidays/default_cdo/jewish/holidays.htm

Interfaith Calendar

<http://www.interfaithcalendar.org/index.htm>

Annex – Religious Festival events in chronological order

Date (chronological order)	Event	Religion	Academic Term 2019
January			
05/01/2020	Guru Gobind Singh Birthday	Sikhism	Spring term
07/01/2020	Orthodox Christmas day	Christianity	Spring term
29/01/2020	Vasant Panchami	Hinduism	Spring term
February			
05/02/2020	Chinese New year	Buddhism	Spring term
21/02/2020	Maha Shivarati	Hinduism	Spring term
24/02/2020 – 26/02/2020	Losar (Tibetan New year)	Buddhism	Spring term
March			
10/03/2020	Purim	Judaism	Spring term
10/03/2020	Holi	Hinduism / Sikh	Spring term
20/03/2020	Naw-Rúz	Baha'i	Spring term
April			
02/04/2020	Ramnavami	Hinduism	Spring term
06/04/2020	Mahavir Jayanti	Jainism	Spring term
08/04/2020	Hunuman Jayanti	Hinduism	Spring term
08/04/ 2020 – 16/04/2020	Pesach/ Passover)	Judaism	Spring term
10/04/2020	Good Friday (Orthodox)	Christianity	Spring term
14/04/2020	Mesdai	Hindusim	Spring term
14/04/2020	Basisakhi / Vaisakhi	Skihism	Spring term
20/04/2020	First Day of Ridvan	Baha'i	Spring term
24/04/2020 – 23/05/2020	Ramadan	Islam / Muslim	Summer term
29/04/2019	Ninth Day of Ridvan	Baha'i	Summer term
May			
01/05/2020	Twelfth /Last day of Ridvan	Baha'i	Summer term
24/04/2020 – 23/05/2020	Ramadan	Islam / Muslim	Summer term
06/05/2020	Visakha Puja – Buddha Day	Buddhism	Spring term
23/05/2020	Declaration of the Báb	Baha'i	Summer term
28/05/2020	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Summer term
30/05/2020	Shavuot	Judaism	Summer term
June			
July			
09/07/2020	Martyrdom of the Báb	Baha'i	Summer term
30/07/2020	Tish'a'B'av	Judaism	Summer term
31/07/2020	Eid-al-Adha	Islam / Muslim	Summer term

August			
11/08/2020	Krishna Janmashtami	Hinduism	Summer term
15/08/2020 – 22/08/2020	Paryushana Parva	Jainism	Summer term
20/08/2020	Muharram / Hijra / Islamic New Year	Islam/ Muslim	Summer term
22/08/2020	Ganesh Chaturthi / Vinayaka Chaturthi	Hinduism	Summer term
29/08/2020	Ashura	Islam / Muslim	Autumn term
September			
18/09/2020 – 20/09/2020	Rosh Hashanah	Judaism	Autumn term
28/9/2020	Yom Kippur	Judaism	Autumn term
October			
03/10/2020 – 09/10/2020	Sukkot	Judaism	Autumn term
10/10/2020	Shemini Atzeret	Judaism	Autumn term
11/10/2020	Simchat Torah	Judaism	Autumn term
16/10/2020	Vikram New Year	Hinduism	Autumn term
17/10/2020 – 24/10/2020	Navatri	Hinduism	Autumn term
18/10/2020	Birth of the Báb	Baha'i	Autumn term
19/10/2020	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Autumn term
29/10/2020	Mawlid an Nabi / Eid Milad un-Nabi / Prophet's Birthday	Islam / Muslim	Autumn term
November			
14/11/2020	Diwali	Sikh/ Hinduism/ Jainism	Autumn term
15/11/2020	Jain New Year	Jainism	Autumn term
25/11/2020	Day of the Covenant	Baha'i	Autumn term
27/11/2020	Ascension of Abdu'l-Bahá	Baha'i	Autumn term
30/11/2020	Guru Nanak	Sikhism	Autumn term
December			
08/12/2020	Bodhi Day	Buddhism	Autumn term
25/12/2020	Christmas Day	Christianity	Autumn term

