



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

School attendance and religious festivals guidance 2021

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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

Enquiries about this document should be directed to:

Support for Learners Division

Education Directorate

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Tel: 0300 0604400

E-mail: CCD.SAS@gov.wales



@WG_Education



Facebook/EducationWales

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 [here](#).

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 2021

The following table **only** includes dates set aside for religious observance for 2021, 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 2021	Summer Term 2021	Autumn Term 2021
Baha'i	<p>Naw Rûz –20/03/2021</p> <p>First day of Ridvan – 20/04/2021</p>	<p>Ninth day of Ridavn – 28/04/2021</p> <p>Ascension of Baha'u'llah - 28/05/2021</p> <p>Martyrdom of the Báb – 09/07/2021</p>	<p>Birth of Baha'u'llah – 06/11/2021</p>
Buddhism	<p>Chinese New Year – 12/02/2021</p> <p>Losar (Tibetan New Year) – 12/02/2021 – 14/02/2021</p> <p>Vesak – 08/04/2021</p>	<p>Asalha Puja – 24/07/2021</p> <p>Visakha Puja / Buddha Day – 19/05/2021</p>	<p>Loy Krathong – 20/11/2021</p> <p>Bodhi Day – 08/12/2021</p>
Christianity	<p>Orthodox Christmas day – 07/01/2021</p> <p>Western Lent – 17/02/2021 – Good Friday 02/04/2021</p>		<p>Christmas Day – 25/12/2021</p>

	Orthodox Lent – 15/03/2021 – 30/04/2021 Orthodox Good Friday – 30/04/2021		
Hinduism	Vasant Panchami – 16/02/2021 Maha Shivarati – 11/03/2021 Holi – 28/03/2021 Ram Navami –21/04/2021 Hunuman Jayanti – 27/04/2021	Krishna Janmashtami – 29/08/2021	Vikram New Year – 05/11/2021 Navaratri – 06/10/2021 – 14/10/2021
Islam / Muslim		Ramadan –13/04/2021 – 12/05/2021 Eid-al-Adha – 20/07/2021 Muharram/ Hijra/ Islamic New Year – 09/08/2021	Mawlid an Nabi/ Eid Milad un-Nabi/ Prophet's Birthday – 19/10/2021
Jainism	Mahavir Jayanti – 25/04/2021	Paryushana Parvarambha – 04/09/2021 – 11/09/2021	
Judaism	Purim – 26/02/2021	Shavuot – 17/05/21- 18/05/21	Rosh Hashanah - 07/09/2021 – 08/09/2021

	Pesach / Passover – 28/03/2021 – 04/04/2021	Tish'a' B'av – 18/07/2021	Yom Kippur – 16/09/2021 Sukkot – 21/09/2021 – 28/09/2021 Chanukah (minor festival)
Sikhism	Vaisakhi / Khalsa Divas – 1/04/2021 Holi - 28/03/2021 Hola Mohalla – 29/03/2021 – 31/03/2021	Shaheedipurb of Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji – 16/06/2021	First Parkashpurb of Sri Guru Granth Sahib – 20/10/2021 Martydom of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur – 24/11/2021 Guru Nanak Parkash Divas – 19/11/2021

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,

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

- **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.

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

	Spring Term 2021	Summer Term 2021	Autumn Term 2021
Baha'i		Declaration of the Báb – 23/05/2021 Twelfth/ Last day of Ridvan – 01/05/2021	Birth of the Báb – 06/11/2021 Ascension of Abdu'l-Bahá – 27/11/2021
Buddhism			
Christianity			
Hinduism		Ganesh Chaturthi / Vinayaka Chaturthi – 10/08/2021	Diwali – 04/11/2021 Navaratri – 06/10/2021 – 14/10/2021
Islam / Muslim		Ramadan –13/04/2021 – 12/05/2021 Ashura – 18/08/2021	
Jainism		Paryushana Parvarambha – 04/09/2021 – 11/09/2021	Jain New Year- 05/11/2021
Judaism	Pesach / Passover – 28/03/2021 – 03/04/2021		Hanukkah – 28/11/20201 – 06/12/2021 Rosh Hashanah - 07/09/2021 – 08/09/2021

			<p>Sukkot –21/09/2021 – 27/09/2021</p> <p>Shemni Atzeret - 28/09/2021</p> <p>Simchat Torah – 29/09/2021</p>
Sikhism	Guru Gobind Singh Birthday – 20/01/2021		Bandi Chhor Divas / Diwali – 04/11/2021

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.interfaith-calendar.org/>

Annex – Religious Festival events in chronological order

Date (chronological order)	Event	Religion	Academic Term 2021
January			
20/01/2021	Guru Gobind Singh Birthday	Sikhism	Spring term
07/01/2021	Orthodox Christmas day	Christianity	Spring term
16/02/2021	Vasant Panchami	Hinduism	Spring term
February			
12/02/2021	Chinese New year	Buddhism	Spring term
11/03/2021	Maha Shivarati	Hinduism	Spring term
12/02/2021 – 14/02/2021	Losar (Tibetan New year)	Buddhism	Spring term
17/02/2021 – 02/04/2021	Western Lent Good Friday (02/04)	Christianity	Spring term
March			
15/03/2021 – 30/04/2021	Orthodox Lent	Christianity	Spring term
26/02/2021 – 27/02/2021	Purim	Judaism	Spring term
19/03/2021 – 20/03/2021	Naw Rûz	Baha'i	Spring term
28/03/2021	Holi	Hinduism / Sikh	Spring term
April			
21/04/2021	Ram Navami	Hinduism	Spring term
25/04/2021	Mahavir Jayanti	Jainism	Spring term
27/04/2021	Hunuman Jayanti	Hinduism	Spring term
28/03/2021 – 03/04/2021	Pesach/ Passover	Judaism	Spring term
30/04/2021	Good Friday (Orthodox)	Christianity	Spring term
14/04/2021	Basisakhi / Vaisakhi	Skikhism	Spring term
20/04/2021	First Day of Ridvan	Baha'i	Spring term
13/04/2021 – 12/05/2021	Ramadan	Islam / Muslim	Summer term
29/04/2021	Ninth Day of Ridvan	Baha'i	Summer term
May			
01/05/2021	Twelfth /Last day of Ridvan	Baha'i	Summer term
13/04/2021 – 12/05/2021	Ramadan	Islam / Muslim	Summer term
19/05/2021	Visakha Puja – Buddha Day	Buddhism	Spring term
23/05/2021	Declaration of the Báb	Baha'i	Summer term
28/05/2021	Ascension of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Summer term
17/05/2021	Shavuot	Judaism	Summer term
June			

July			
09/07/2021	Martyrdom of the Báb	Baha'i	Summer term
17/07/2021 – 18/07/2021 ³⁰	Tish'a'B'av	Judaism	Summer term
20/07/2021	Eid-al-Adha	Islam / Muslim	Summer term
August			
29/08/2021	Krishna Janmashtami	Hinduism	Summer term
04/09/2021 – 11/09/2021	Paryushana Parvarambha –	Jainism	Summer term
09/08/2021	Muharram / Hijra / Islamic New Year	Islam/ Muslim	Summer term
10/08/2021	Ganesh Chaturthi / Vinayaka Chaturthi	Hinduism	Summer term
18/08/2021	Ashura	Islam / Muslim	Autumn term
September			
07/09/2021 – 08/09/2021	Rosh Hashanah	Judaism	Autumn term
16/09/2021	Yom Kippur	Judaism	Autumn term
October			
21/09/2021 – 27/09/2021	Sukkot	Judaism	Autumn term
28/09/2021	Shemini Atzeret	Judaism	Autumn term
29/09/2021	Simchat Torah	Judaism	Autumn term
05/11/2021	Vikram New Year	Hinduism	Autumn term
06/10/2021 – 14/10/2021	Navatri Navaratri	Hinduism	Autumn term
06/11/2021	Birth of the Báb	Baha'i	Autumn term
07/11/2021	Birth of Baha'u'llah	Baha'i	Autumn term
19/10/2021	Mawlid an Nabi / Eid Milad un-Nabi / Prophet's Birthday	Islam / Muslim	Autumn term
November			
04/11/2021	Diwali	Sikh/ Hinduism/ Jainism	Autumn term
05/11/2021	Jain New Year	Jainism	Autumn term
20/11/2021	Loy Krathong	Buddhism	Autumn term
25/11/2021	Day of the Covenant	Baha'i	Autumn term
27/11/2021	Ascension of Abdu'l-Bahá	Baha'i	Autumn term
19/11/2021	Guru Nanak	Sikhism	Autumn term
December			

08/12/2021	Bodhi Day	Buddhism	Autumn term
25/12/2021	Christmas Day	Christianity	Autumn term