



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# **School attendance and religious festivals guidance 2024**

# School attendance and religious festivals guidance 2024

## **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:

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@WG\_Education



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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 learners who practice a faith under the Religion Values & Ethics (RVE) shown in the new curriculum.

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.

Where appropriate, religious bodies have confirmed if the day is not set 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 2024

The following table **only** includes dates set aside for religious observance for 2024, 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 2024, which fall over a weekend are not included in the below table but, for reference, are included in Annex 1

	Spring Term 2024	Summer Term 2024	Autumn Term 2024
<b>Baha'i</b>	<b>Ninth day of Ridavn –</b> 30/04/2024	<b>Twelfth/ Last day of</b> <b>Ridvan – 03/05/2024</b>  <b>Declaration of the Báb –</b> 23/05/2024  <b>Ascension of Baha'u'llah</b> – 28/05/2024  <b>Martyrdom of the Báb –</b> 09/07/2024	<b>Twin Holy Days – (births</b> <b>of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb</b> – 02/11/2024 & 03/11/2024  <b>Ascension of Abdu'l-Bahá</b> – 27/11/2024
<b>Buddhist</b>		<b>Visakha Puja / Buddha</b> <b>Day – 15/05/2024</b>  <b>Vesak – 23/05/2024</b>	<b>Bodhi Day – 09/12/2024</b>
<b>Christian</b>	<b>Western Lent – 14/02/2024 –</b> 28/03/2024  <b>Good Friday 29/03/2024</b>		<b>Western Christmas Day –</b> 25/12/2024

	<b>Orthodox Lent</b> – 18/03/2024 – 03/05/2024  <b>Orthodox Good Friday</b> – 03/05/2024		
<b>Hindu</b>	<b>Vasant Panchami</b> – 14/02/2024  <b>Maha Shivarati</b> – 08/03/2024  <b>Holi</b> – 25/03/2024  <b>Ram Navami</b> –17/04/2024  <b>Hunuman Jayanti</b> – 23/04/2024	<b>Krishna Janmashtami</b> – 26/08/2024	<b>Ganesh Chaturthi / Vinayaka Chaturthi</b> – 07/09/2024  <b>Navaratri</b> – 03/10/2024 – 12/10/2024  <b>Durga Puja</b> – 09/10/2024 – 13/10/2024
<b>Muslim</b>		<b>Ramadan</b> – 10/03/2024 – 09/04/2024  <b>Eid-al-Adha</b> – 16/06/2024 – 20/06/2024  <b>Ashura</b> – 28/07/2024	<b>Mawlid an Nabi/ Eid Milad un-Nabi/ Prophet's Birthday</b> – 16/09/2024
<b>Jainism</b>	<b>Mahavir Jayanti</b> – 21/04/2024		<b>Paryushana Parvarambha</b> – 31/08/2024

<b>Jewish</b>	<b>Pesach / Passover –</b> 22/04/2024 – 30/04/2024	<b>Shavuot – 11/06/2024 -</b> 13/06/2024  <b>Tish’a’B’av – 13/08/2024</b>	<b>Rosh Hashanah -</b> 02/10/2024 – 04/10/2024  <b>Sukkot – 16/10/2024 –</b> 23/10/2024  <b>Shemini Atzeret -</b> 23/10/2024 – 25/10/2024  <b>Simchat Torah –</b> 25/10/2024  <b>Chanukah</b> (minor festival)
<b>Sikh</b>	<b>Parkashpurb of Sri Guru</b> <b>Gobind Singh ji –</b> 05/01/2024  <b>First Parkashpurb of Sri</b> <b>Guru Granth Sahib –</b> 17/01/2024  <b>Holi – 25/03/2024</b>	<b>Martyrdom of Guru Arjan</b> <b>Dev Sahib – 10/06/2024</b>	<b>Guru Nanak Parkash</b> <b>Divas – 27/11/2024</b>

## 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-day<sup>1</sup> common year divided into twelve months of irregular lengths.
- **Lunar**<sup>2</sup> calendars are based on the rotation of the Moon around the 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 faith/belief based celebrations may vary geographically and year on year.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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 2024

	<b>Spring Term 2024</b>	<b>Summer Term 2024</b>	<b>Autumn Term 2024</b>
<b>Baha'i</b>	<b>Naw Ruz – 20/03/2024</b>  <b>First day of Ridvan – 21/04/2024</b>		
<b>Buddhist</b>	<b>Chinese New Year – 10/02/2024</b>  <b>Losar (Tibetan New Year) –10/02/2024 - 12/02/2024</b>	<b>Asalha Puja – 20/07/2024</b>	<b>Loy Krathong – 16/11/2024</b>
<b>Christian</b>	<b>Orthodox Christmas day – 07/01/2024</b>		
<b>Hindu</b>			<b>Vikram New Year – 02/11/2024</b>
<b>Muslim</b>		<b>Ramadan – 10/03/2024 – 09/04/2024</b>  <b>Muharram/ Hijra/ Islamic New Year – 07/07/2024</b>	

<b>Jainism</b>			<b>Jain New Year –</b> 02/11/2024
<b>Jewish</b>	<b>Purim – 23/03/2024 –</b> 24/03/2024		<b>Yom Kippur – 12/10/2024</b>
<b>Sikh</b>	<b>Vaisakhi / Khalsa Divas –</b> 14/04/2024		<b>Martyrdom of Sri Guru</b> <b>Tegh Bahadur –</b> 24/11/2024  <b>Bandi Chhor Divas / Diwali</b> – 01/11/2024

## Wales Association Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (WASAC)

The Standing Advisory Councils (SACs) of all Local Authorities in Wales are members of the Wales Association of SACs (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*' (where one exists)
- 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 to maintain open and honest dialogue with the families to cover their individual circumstances.

Furthermore, the lunar nature of Islamic calendar and the different authorities that Muslims rely on for the announcement of the start and end of Ramadan, means that there is the potential for Muslim learners in the same school to start/ finish the fasting month and celebrate Eid a day before 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(s) 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 Ramadan (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:

- learn and understand the diversity of their communities with regards to a child's faith/belief.
- 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
- make appropriate provision for the needs of children who outwardly show or have a faith/belief that requires them 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 a 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 for regular absences
- Reach out to their local faith based 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](http://www.when-is.com)

[https://www.chabad.org/holidays/default\\_cdo/jewish/holidays.htm](https://www.chabad.org/holidays/default_cdo/jewish/holidays.htm)

Interfaith Calendar

<http://www.interfaith-calendar.org/>

Annex – Religious Festival events in chronological order

<b>Date</b> (chronological order)	<b>Event</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Academic Term 2024</b>
<b>January</b>			
05/01/2024	Parkashpurb of Sri Guru Gobind Singh ji	Sikhism	Spring term
07/01/2024	Orthodox Christmas day	Christianity	Spring term
17/01/2024	First Parkashpurb of Sri Guru Granth Sahib	Sikhism	Spring term
<b>February</b>			
10/02/2024	Chinese New year	Buddhism	Spring term
10/02/2024 - 12/02/2024	Losar (Tibetan New year)	Buddhism	Spring term
14/02/2024	Vasant Panchami	Hinduism	Spring term
14/02/2024 – 29/03/2024	Western Lent	Christianity	Spring term
<b>March</b>			
08/03/2024	Maha Shivarati	Hinduism	Spring term
10/03/2024 – 09/04/2024	Ramadan	Islam / Muslim	Spring term
18/03/2024 – 03/05/2024	Orthodox Lent	Christianity	Spring term
20/03/2024	Naw Rùz	Bahá'í	Spring term
23/03/2024 – 24/03/2024	Purim	Judaism	Spring term
25/03/2024	Holi	Hinduism / Sikh	Spring term

29/03/2024	Western Good Friday	Christianity	Spring term
<b>April</b>			
14/04/2024	Vaisakhi / Khalsa Divas	Skikhism	Spring term
17/04/2024	Ram Navami	Hinduism	Spring term
21/04/2024	Mahavir Jayanti	Jainism	Spring term
21/04/2024	First Day of Ridvan	Bahá'í	Spring term
22/04/2024 – 30/04/2024	Pesach/ Passover	Judaism	Spring term
23/04/2024	Hunuman Jayanti	Hinduism	Spring term
29/04/2024	Ninth Day of Ridvan	Bahá'í	Spring term
<b>May</b>			
02/05/2024	Twelfth /Last day of Ridvan	Bahá'í	Summer term
03/05/2024	Orthodox Good Friday	Christianity	Spring term
23/05/2024	Declaration of the Báb	Bahá'í	Summer term
<b>June</b>			
10/06/2024	Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Sahib	Sikhism	Summer term

11/06/2024 – 13/06/2024	Shavuot	Judaism	Summer term
16/06/2024 – 20/06/2024	Eid-al-Adha	Islam / Muslim	Summer term
<b>July</b>			
07/07/2024	Muharram / Hijra / Islamic New Year	Islam/ Muslim	Summer term
09/07/2024	Martyrdom of the Báb	Bahá'í	Summer term
28/07/2024	Ashura	Islam / Muslim	Summer term
<b>August</b>			
13/08/2024	Tish'a'B'av	Judaism	Summer term
26/08/2024	Krishna Janmashtami	Hinduism	Autumn term
31/08/2024	Paryushana Parvarambha	Jainism	Autumn term
<b>September</b>			
07/09/2024	Ganesh Chaturthi / Vinayaka Chaturthi	Hinduism	Autumn term
16/09/2024	Mawlid an Nabi / Eid Milad un-Nabi / Prophet's Birthday	Islam / Muslim	Autumn term
<b>October</b>			
02/10/2024 – 04/10/2024	Rosh Hashanah	Judaism	Autumn term
03/10/2024 – 12/10/2024	Navaratri	Hinduism	Autumn term
09/10/2024 – 13/10/2024	Durga Puja	Hinduism	Autumn term
12/10/2024	Yom Kippur	Judaism	Autumn term
16/10/2024 – 23/10/2024	Sukkot	Judaism	Autumn term
23/10/2024 – 25/10/2024	Shemini Atzeret	Judaism	Autumn term

25/10/2024	Simchat Torah	Judaism	Autumn term
<b>November</b>			
01/11/2024	Diwali	Sikh/ Hinduism/ Jainism	Autumn term
02/11/2024	Jain New Year	Jainism	Autumn term
02/11/2024 & 03/11/2024	Twin Holy Days – (births of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb	Baha'i	Autumn term
02/11/2024	Vikram New Year	Hinduism	Autumn term
16/11/2024	Loy Krathong	Buddhism	Autumn term
27/11/2024	Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá	Bahá'í	Autumn term
27/11/2024	Guru Nanak	Sikhism	Autumn term
<b>December</b>			
09/12/2024	Bodhi Day	Buddhism	Autumn term
25/12/2024	Western Christmas Day	Christianity	Autumn term