

# SEVENOAKS SCHOOL

<b><i>Policy reference</i></b>	AR2
<b><i>Policy Category</i></b>	Student and Parent Facing
<b><i>Name of policy</i></b>	Religious Observance and Fasting Policy
<b><i>Purpose of policy</i></b>	The School is committed to fostering an inclusive, supportive, and respectful environment for all community members. This policy outlines the adjustments and considerations for students, staff, and parents who observe religious fasting periods, including but not limited to Lent, Ramadan, Yom Kippur, and other similar observances. The aim is to ensure that students and staff are supported while maintaining their health, well-being, and academic success.
<b><i>Regulatory or legal requirement addressed by policy</i></b>	Equality Act 2010
<b><i>Other policies referred to</i></b>	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
<b><i>Policy owned by</i></b>	Senior Deputy Head
<b><i>Date effective from</i></b>	October 2024
<b><i>Published on website/external facing</i></b>	Yes

## **Religious Observance and Fasting Policy**

### **Policy Overview:**

The School is committed to fostering an inclusive, supportive, and respectful environment for all community members. This policy outlines the adjustments and considerations for students, staff, and parents who observe religious fasting periods, including but not limited to Lent, Ramadan, Yom Kippur, and other similar observances. The aim is to ensure that students and staff are supported while maintaining their health, well-being, and academic success.

### **Aims**

- To respect and accommodate the religious practices of community members observing fasting periods.
- To ensure the well-being and success of students and staff who are fasting.
- To provide guidance to staff on how to support those who are fasting, irrespective of their faith.

### **1. Context**

Fasting is a common practice in various religions, including Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. Fasting typically involves abstaining from food, drink, and other practices for set periods. This policy recognises the significance of fasting as a religious observance and seeks to make appropriate accommodations for all individuals engaged in this practice.

### **2. Adjustments for Fasting Students**

#### **2.1. Academic Adjustments**

**2.1.1. Homework and Assignments:** Teachers will consider extending deadlines for fasting students when their energy levels are impacted by fasting. Students should communicate proactively with their teachers about their needs ahead of deadlines.

**2.1.2. Class Participation:** Fasting students may experience reduced energy. Teachers will allow for less intensive participation where needed. Teachers will avoid scheduling class activities centred around food or drink during fasting periods.

**2.1.3. Inclusion:** All students, including those who are not fasting, will be informed of the significance of religious fasting to create an inclusive atmosphere.

**2.1.4. Examinations:** Where exams fall during a fast period reasonable adjustments will be made for fasting students to ensure their exams are scheduled at times that are less physically demanding, such as in the morning, or that there are sufficient rest breaks between exams. Consideration will be given to the temperature of the room to ensure fasting students are not subject to dehydration.

#### **2.2. Physical Education and Co-Curricular Activities**

**2.2.1. PE Lessons:** Content will be adjusted to allow fasting students to participate in light exercises or observe lessons if they prefer. Fasting students may request to be excused from swimming lessons or activities where water ingestion is a concern.

**2.2.2. Sports Teams:** Fasting students may modify their training schedules or opt out of physical activities, including matches, without penalty.

**2.2.3. Other Co-Curricular Activities:** Students should communicate with their activity leaders to adjust participation in accordance with their fasting observance.

### **2.3. School Planning**

School events, including field trips, excursions, and co-curricular activities, will consider the needs of fasting students. Rest periods and space for prayer will be provided, and fasting students should discuss their participation in advance with staff if they foresee scheduling conflicts due to religious observances.

## **2.4. Meal Provisions – Boarding**

**2.4.1. Breaking Fast:** Suitable space will be available for fasting students to break their fast after sunset. Students may gather in groups to observe Iftar, provided there is minimal disruption to others.

**2.4.2. Pre-Dawn Meal:** Boarding students will have access to facilities early in the morning to prepare meals before the start of the fast.

## **2.5. Prayer Accommodations**

A quiet and private space will be provided for fasting individuals to observe their prayers. This will include midday and afternoon prayers for day students and staff, and additional provisions for morning and evening prayers in boarding houses.

## **2.6. Detention**

Students may request that a detention which falls during a period of religious observance be rescheduled.

## **3. Sensitivity and Awareness**

### **3.1. Cultural Sensitivity**

**3.1.1. Training:** The school will provide resources and training to help staff understand the significance of fasting across various religions. Staff will be mindful of comments or actions that may inadvertently make fasting individuals feel uncomfortable or singled out.

**3.1.2. Privacy:** The school will respect the privacy of students and staff regarding whether or not they choose to observe fasting, recognizing that participation may vary within religious groups.

### **3.2. Communication**

**3.2.1. Student Dialogue:** Fasting students are encouraged to communicate their needs and any required adjustments. No assumptions will be made about an individual's fasting practices.

**3.2.2. Parents:** Parents are encouraged to inform the school about their child's fasting practices to ensure proper support.

**3.2.3. Parents' Evenings:** When Parents' Evenings fall during fasting periods, the school will accommodate requests to schedule meetings at suitable times, such as before the fast is broken in the evening.

## **4. Health and Well-being**

### **4.1. Monitoring Health**

**4.1.1. Health Check-Ins:** Boarding and day staff will regularly check in with fasting students to ensure they are managing well.

**4.1.2. Support Services:** Access to health services will be available to fasting individuals who require additional physical or emotional support.

**4.1.3. Medication:** Individuals who require regular medication are generally exempt from fasting. However, students who wish to adjust their medical routines to fast should consult with health staff.

**4.1.4. Medical Emergencies:** The well-being of a fasting individual will take priority. In emergencies, necessary treatment, including the administration of medication, should be given, regardless of fasting.

#### **4.2. Mental and Emotional Support**

**4.2.1. Encouragement and Understanding:** The school will offer understanding and support to fasting individuals, recognizing the discipline involved in maintaining these observances.

#### **5. Adjustments for Staff**

**5.1. Working Hours and Environment** Staff members who are fasting may request adjustments to their working hours and environment to accommodate their religious observances. Where possible, the school will provide flexibility, particularly in scheduling evening duties.

#### **5.2. Prayer Accommodations**

The school will ensure that quiet and private spaces are available for staff to observe their midday and afternoon prayers.

POLICY SIGN-OFF AND OWNERSHIP DETAILS	
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Approved by	SLT
Date Approved:	tbc
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Consulted with (Departments / Area of Service / Job Title):	Senior Leadership Team
Author:	Senior Deputy Head <i>The Senior Deputy Head / EDI Lead will oversee the implementation of this policy, ensuring staff receive the necessary training and resources.</i>
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REVISION HISTORY			
Version	Date	Revision description/Summary of changes	Author
V1.0	October 2024	New policy	Senior Deputy Head