

Policy on Religion and the College Community

Introduction & Principles

1. The sixth form is a time for young people to explore their values and develop the beliefs they hold. This happens alongside and through making choices about their future and deciding how to use the freedoms which are often a part of forming their more adult selves. Whilst respecting beliefs as essentially a private matter, the College is, however, a secular institution, committed to equality and diversity and based on liberal values such as intellectual enquiry, scepticism, respect for others with different beliefs. As such, the College values the rich diversity of its community.
2. Misunderstandings are minimised by taking as a principle that all existing and potential students and staff can access the College and its facilities equally within reasonable, practical limits regardless of religious beliefs or observances.

Policy Statements

The College will:

- 3.1 Defend and support the right of individuals to their own beliefs, as long as these do not impinge materially on the rights and freedoms of others or cause harm to individuals.
- 3.2 Foster a culture of the free exchange of ideas; freedom of speech will be limited only where it is used to encourage violence, hatred, fear or the belittling or marginalisation of members of the College community.
- 3.3 Ensure that the canteen offers food and drink, where possible, that staff and students from all backgrounds and religious persuasions can consume.
- 3.4 Allow students to wear clothing that is consistent with their religious beliefs as long as it complies with the student code of conduct, health & safety and security considerations.
- 3.5 Allow staff to exercise individual choice in their dress as long as this does not interfere with the highest quality of work being accomplished and as long as this supports the professionalism with which the college functions.
- 3.6 Allow staff and students reasonable time off for particular religious days.
- 3.7 Provide a quiet room, where accommodation constraints allow, which can be used for prayer or contemplation. Students will not be exempted from lessons or part of lessons for the purposes of prayer. The quiet room is at all times a space for people of all faiths and people of no faith. The College will also provide a space, where accommodation constraints allow, for Muslim prayers on a Friday. Prayer is a private matter and it is not appropriate for prayer to take place in public spaces of the college.

- 3.8 Act against discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief. This could include College-supported campaigns, for example, against Islamophobia or anti-Semitism. It also includes action against bullying on grounds of religion or unwelcome pressure to comply with supposed religious norms.
- 3.9 Support the moral, social and cultural development of students through discussion, debate and a wide range of activities. However, as a secular institution, the College will not countenance the promotion of religion in general or any faith in particular. It will not provide a platform for speakers or organisations advocating or condemning any specific faith. All outside speakers will be approved in advance by College management and will not be given access to students without College staff in attendance.
- 3.10 Not permit proselytising. All have the right to pursue their own religion or faith in the way that they wish to and should be under no coercion from others to conform to a particular standard or set of practices. No individual or groups of individuals will be permitted to hold activities or generate publicity in an attempt to convert others to their faith or to their interpretation of a faith.
- 3.11 Promote a cohesive community and the emphasis on shared British values and interests rather than those which are sectional or divisive. The College will be guided by this when it considers permission for particular events and activities.
- 3.12 Construct, in association with College Council, a list of approved charities at the beginning of each academic year. The purpose of such a list is to ensure that charity fundraising adds to community cohesion and that scheduling avoids clashing or charity fatigue. Religion-based charities will not usually be approved where secular alternatives exist. Charity fundraising will be permitted only for those on the approved list, with events-driven exceptions permissible, subject to approval by SLT and College Council. Any charity fundraising activities must be approved before they commence.
- 3.13 Permit student-led societies/organisations which comply with College rules and policies and under staff supervision/oversight. The College will monitor materials, including social media, of any such societies and reserves the right to demand amendments and/or deletions as appropriate.
- 3.14 Reserve the right to prohibit any inappropriate activities which risk inciting religious intolerance, incurring reputational damage to the College or impacting on the health and safety of its students.

June 2017

Next review: June 2019