UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL

University of Birmingham School

Position Statement: Personal Prayer & Reflection

2024/2025

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Governors' Position Statement - 2024/25

Personal Prayer and Reflection

Last reviewed:
6th November 2024

Previously reviewed:
8th November 2023
1st March 2023
9th November 2022
10th November 2021
18th November 2020
4th December 2019

Pastoral Committee on behalf of the Governing Board

University of Birmingham School is an 11-18 secondary phase free School serving diverse communities from across the city. We aim to be an inclusive School, representative of the City of Birmingham. We welcome pupils and families of all faiths, and those of none. The School is secular (it has no direct religious foundation or standing) and families should be clear in understanding and accepting this in seeking admission to University of Birmingham School. The Governors recognize and understand all of their obligations in relation to the Equalities Act (2010) which inform this Position Statement adopted by the School.

Through our L4L (Learning for Life) programme, and more widely, we promote tolerance, respect, and understanding of others, including but not limited to, faith. We emphasise and value broad based virtues – developed and supported through a blend of taught curriculum and caught approaches.

University of Birmingham School opened in September 2015 with approximately 300 pupils and students in total. At September 2024 the School roll is approximately 1180 and full with pupils and students in all year cohorts (years 7 to 13). There are two lunch sittings in 2024/25. During each lunch sitting teaching and learning for others occurs simultaneously. This detail is provided to outline operational contexts and constraints.

Many logistical challenges and barriers to easily facilitating personal prayer and reflection exist, such as the unavailability of a bespoke onsite room. Other day-to- day arrangements within the School such as areas identified and known to pupils as (year group) breakout spaces, mean that the School is in a position to make the following arrangements:

- Members of the Sixth Form may use rooms allocated in the lower ground floor of the Sixth Form Centre for personal prayer and reflection during their assigned lunch period.

- Members of the main School (years 7 to 11) may with the awareness and permission of their year group Pastoral Manager use allocated rooms in a designated year group corridor for personal prayer and reflection during their assigned lunch period.

- With an hour for the lunch period scheduled routinely on a Friday for Sixth Formers, students in year 12 and year 13 may be able to attend places of worship local to the School should they so choose – but students should return promptly for the start of the Friday afternoon core-curriculum enrichment session.

It is anticipated that pupils and students will show good character in their mutual support and respect for the implementation of this Position Statement, demonstrating responsibility and consideration for others.

The safeguards and understandings below are also in place:

- Spaces are for personal prayer and reflection only. It would not be fair or equal that we facilitate or condone led prayer of one faith without considering that we do so for all faiths – and this is therefore to be avoided. Logistically to operate in such a manner would fall outside of the resources available to the School.

- Whilst the School does not have the staffing resource to allocate direct duty supervision, and that might in any event be deemed intrusive for pupils and students seeking a period of quiet contemplation, there will by nature of the operation and organisation of the School be passive supervision from the corridor break-out space, various work-bases, classrooms, and staff members moving about the building.

- Those wishing to undertake prayer and reflection accept that this is quiet time – and pupils and students understand that this is not an opportunity for social interaction.

- Spaces are for optional use by all – including those of faith and those of none. Arrangements for personal prayer and reflection must not explicitly segregate or exclude any pupil (or pupil characteristic) as this would be contrary to the School's statutory duty to promote equality and its own commitment to inclusion.

- The provision of and requirement for a broad, balanced, and full curriculum – coupled with other operational constraints (underpinned by the School timetable) mean that personal prayer and reflection can only occur during a part of a pupil or student's lunch period – and for their wider wellbeing they should also carefully balance time for food and eating.

- Spaces used for personal prayer and reflection will inevitably be used for other School activity or learning – and where appropriate pupils and students should assume shared responsibility for leaving the physical layout of rooms ready for use by others.

- Notably in the Sixth Form (where the use of devices is less regulated than in the main School), phones and recording devices must not be used in spaces adopted for personal prayer and reflection.

Members of staff:

- Members of staff wishing to undertake personal prayer and reflection are welcome to use the spaces detailed herein this statement – and are naturally at liberty to attend local places of worship or reflection during their own break periods from work.

- Where teaching staff have department ownership of a classroom as a base, staff should feel able to locate a classroom where available for personal prayer and reflection, as an alternative during their own break periods from work.

- It may alternatively be possible to accommodate a personal prayer and reflection request from a small number of staff, including professional services staff not typically based in a classroom, within scarce space availability usually reserved for small meetings. In such circumstances the staff member should liaise with their line manager in the first instance.

Review and evaluation:

The Governors' Position Statement on personal prayer and reflection is kept under close informal review, and formally on an annual basis through the School's Pastoral Committee, so that the intent and spirit of the position and arrangements are operationally manageable and safe.