



Harrogate Ladies' College

Culture and Diversity Policy

1. **Mission statement and Ethos**

At Harrogate Ladies' College, we aim to provide a stable, caring environment where girls can develop through adolescence into young adulthood, confident to take their place in the world and eager to make a contribution to the wider community. We encourage perseverance, respect for ourselves, for others and for our environment and we seek to embrace differences and celebrate inclusion.

We believe the spiritual ethos of our school is an important foundation that underpins all areas of school life. We are a multi-cultural society, reflecting the world in which pupils at Harrogate Ladies' College will ultimately be living and working and we hope that these principles will help pupils face the challenges of modern life.

Through the strong pastoral systems in school and in the boarding houses, we endeavour to create a close sense of family within our community. Pupils of all ages work closely with academic and boarding staff to develop levels of tolerance, good principles and manners.

2. **Ways in which we aim to ensure all cultures are valued and respected**

We are aware of the diverse cultural and faith backgrounds from which our students come. We make every effort to respect, value and celebrate this diversity, and to make good use of the educational opportunities it affords.

Harrogate Ladies' College is an interdenominational school but observes the traditions of the Church of England. The worship calendar is overseen by the Headmistress, Deputy Head and Head of Boarding. Girls may be prepared for confirmation if they wish and the service takes place in the school Chapel.

When students arrive at HLC, we ascertain whether there are any particular cultural or faith requirements we need to be aware of. We then try to ensure the needs are met. For example, appropriate study facilities were provided for some of our Muslim students who wished to fulfil prayer obligations; one of our Muslim students from Brunei was given permission to wear a headscarf as is her tradition at home; a request not to attend Sunday Chapel services was considered and granted. Halal meat is available as required, and our catering staff are sensitive to the preferences of our Chinese students, providing some familiar foods and presenting the whole school with a traditional Chinese meal at Chinese New Year.

Senior Staff have a good working knowledge of the countries and cultures of origins of many of our students. The Headmistress has taught in both Hong Kong and Brunei; the Head of Maths and Head of Support for Learning have both worked in International Schools; the Deputy, Chaplain and Registrar have all travelled to Hong Kong, China and Brunei, meeting students and their families. One full time member of staff comes from Taiwan and another comes from China. All of this experience helps to inform our provision.

Girls throughout the school are given the opportunity to learn Mandarin and this promotes a deeper understanding amongst girls of the challenges faced by their fellow students. Teaching within the Religious Studies Department includes exploration of each of the major world faiths and so allows students to grow in understanding and appreciation of cultural and religious diversity. During their time at HLC, students will visit a variety of places of worship including synagogues, gurdwaras and mosques, meeting members of the local faith communities on each occasion. Discussion opportunities both within lessons and outside them, allow girls to develop an understanding of the rich variety of cultures represented in the school community.

Our morning Chapel services provide further opportunity for celebrating cultural diversity. We have marked Chinese New Year and the Moon Festival, observed Holocaust Memorial Day and reflected on the Muslim practice of fasting in Ramadan. Both Form and House groups devise their own chapel services on occasions and these regularly make good use of the cultural diversity in our midst. In one recent Chapel service, we were all wished 'Happy Christmas' in twelve different languages. Prayers and readings from different traditions are regularly used in Chapel. We have also encouraged girls to share what they have learnt of different cultures on a conservation expedition to Indonesia and a volunteering trip to Africa, working for Friends of Tanzania. Chapel Wardens, Collectors and Bell ringers are selected from each House.