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Religions, cultures, ethics: Information for parents

Being together with people with different religious beliefs and cultures

In their day-to-day lives, children and young people spend time with people with different backgrounds, religious beliefs and world views. Diversity is an intrinsic feature of our society. Religious beliefs and values can give rise to questions. Lessons in «Religions, cultures and ethics» examine these questions and help uncover similarities and diversity.

Religions and cultures

How and why do people celebrate the festivities they do? What is their day-to-day like? What beliefs matter to them? What rules do they follow? How have religious traditions shaped cultures? It is important to discuss such questions with children and young people. This helps them understand the world they live in and to respect those with different religious, cultural or ideological backgrounds.

Ethics and philosophising

When thinking about basic human experiences such as fear, security, success, failure, birth, death, illness and death, young people become aware of important values: Justice, freedom, responsibility, dignity. Philosophising can enrich the learning experience in all subjects and help to address controversial questions and ethical challenges.

Goals of the syllabus

- Awareness among students of the diversity of religion in society.
- Students learn about typical aspects and traditions from different religions.
- They understand the meaning of religious traditions in society.
- In their day-to-day lives they are able to communicate with others with different beliefs and world views and with people with other religions and cultures.
- They respect different values and lifestyles.
- They develop an understanding of everyday philosophical and ethical questions.

Focus areas at primary school

The students discuss the different themes and aspects of religion that they encounter at school and in their everyday lives. In particular, students learn the basic concepts and customs around Christianity, which has shaped and continues to shape culture and society in the county of Zurich.

The children consider questions for which there are no conclusive answers, as well as ethical challenges, values and norms that inform communal life.

Focus areas at secondary school

In secondary school students acquire basic knowledge of the main world religions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. They develop an understanding of how people live their religious and cultural traditions.

Students explore ethical challenges as well as develop an understanding of values and norms and an ability to explain and justify decisions.

«Religions, cultures and ethics»

Your child will study «Religions, cultures, ethics». In doing so, they will acquire knowledge about different religions in the context of culture and will explore ethical questions. This contributes to their general knowledge base and supports their understanding of today's world.

The lessons respect parents' and children's world views and beliefs. Childrens' religious upbringing remains the responsibility of parents. «Religions, cultures, ethics» does not replace classes held at church or other religious institutions, nor does it presume attendance of religious institutions.

Religious practices are not permitted in schools. For example, there are no prayers during lessons. Instead students learn when and how people from different religions pray.

«Religions, cultures and ethics» lessons are structured in such a way that all students can take part irrespective of their background or religious tradition. The constitutional freedom of conscience and beliefs is ensured.

«Religions, cultures, ethics» lessons are compulsory and are taught as follows:

- Years 1 to 6 of primary school 1 lesson a week
- Year 1 of secondary school 2 lessons a week
- Year 2 of secondary school 1 lesson a week

Please contact your child's teacher if you have any questions. Visit the Zurich Education Authority's website for the syllabus (Zurich Lehrplan 21) and further information on Religions, cultures and ethics:

www.zh.ch/vs-schulinfo -> Unterricht -> Fachbereiche & Module