

REDCLIFFE PRIMARY SCHOOL



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Religious Observances Policy

Religious instruction is understood to include instruction in a particular faith or belief, with a view to the inculcation of adherence to that faith or belief.

Religious instruction of this sort is primarily the responsibility of the home, the family, and the religious community, and more needs to be done to strengthen this role, in place of the school. Religious Instruction would in most cases be provided by clergy, or other persons accredited by faith communities to do so. Religious Instruction may not be part of the formal school programme, as constituted by the National Curriculum Statement, although schools are encouraged to allow the use of their facilities for such programmes, in a manner that does not interrupt or detract from the core educational purposes of the school. This could include voluntary gatherings and meetings of religious associations during break times.

Schools currently make provision for important holy days, in regard to the setting of examinations and tests, to ensure that pupils are not prejudiced by their attendance at religious observances. Similarly, the possibility of a "release time" for pupils to attend Religious Observances or Instruction off the school property may be considered by schools, but in each case provision must be made to catch up any loss of teaching and learning time.

This policy encourages the provision of religious instruction by religious bodies and other accredited groups outside the formal school curriculum on school premises, provided that opportunities be afforded in an equitable manner to all religious bodies represented in a school, that no denigration or caricaturing of any other religion take place, and that attendance at such instruction be voluntary. Persons offering Religious Instruction would do so under the authority of the religious body, and would not be required to be registered with the South African Council for Educators.

Religious Observances

In accordance with the Constitution, the South African Schools Act, and rules made by the appropriate authorities, the Governing Bodies of public schools may make their facilities available for religious observances, in the context of free and voluntary association, and provided that facilities are made available on an equitable basis.

There are various types of religious observance implied in this instance:

- voluntary public occasions, which make use of school facilities, for a religious service on a day of worship or rest;
- voluntary occasions when the school community (teachers and pupils) gather for a religious observance;
- observances held in a voluntary gathering of pupils and/or teachers during a school break; and

- an observance which may be ongoing, and entail other dimensions such as dress, prayer times and diets, which must be respected and accommodated in a manner agreed upon by the school and the relevant faith authorities.

Voluntary religious observances in which the public participates should be encouraged. Although such religious observances take place on the school property, they are not part of the official educational function of the public school.

School Governing Bodies are required to determine the nature and content of and religious observances for teachers and pupils, such that coherence and alignment with this policy and applicable legislation is ensured. It may also determine that a policy of no religious observances be followed. Where religious observances are held, these may be at any time determined by the school, and may be part of a school assembly. However, an assembly is not necessarily to be seen as the only occasion for religious observance, which may take place at other times of the day, and in other ways, including specific dress requirements or dietary injunctions. Where a religious observance is organised, as an official part of the school day, it must accommodate and reflect the multi-religious nature of the country in an appropriate manner.

Appropriate and equitable means of acknowledging the multi-religious nature of a school community may include the following:

- The separation of learners according to religion, where the observance takes place outside of the context of a school assembly, and with equitably supported opportunities for observance by all faiths, and appropriate use of the time for those holding secular or humanist beliefs;
- Rotation of opportunities for observance, in proportion to the representation of different religions in the school;
- Selected readings from various texts emanating from different religions;
- The use of a universal prayer; or
- A period of silence.

Other forms of equitable treatment may be developed which are consistent with this policy and applicable legislation. Where the segregation of pupils is contemplated, a school must consider and mitigate the impact of peer pressure on children, and its negative influence on the willingness of children to be identified as "different".

A school assembly has the potential for affirming and celebrating unity in diversity, and should be used for this purpose. Public schools may not violate the religious freedom of pupils and teachers by imposing religious uniformity on a religiously diverse school population in school assemblies. Where a religious observance is included in a school assembly, pupils may be excused on grounds of conscience from attending a religious observance component, and equitable arrangements must be made for these pupils.

Since the state is not a religious organisation, theological body, or inter-faith forum, the state cannot allow unfair access to the use its resources to propagate any particular religion or religions. The state must maintain parity of esteem with respect to religion, religious or secular beliefs in all of its public institutions, including its public schools.

This policy provides a framework within which Religious Observances could be organised at public schools. Schools and teachers should take cognisance of the opportunities that the framework offers for the development of ethical, moral, and civic values. The policy does not prescribe specific ways in which religious observances at public schools must be organised, and encourages creative and innovative approaches in this area. It is our hope that schools will make use of these opportunities.

Conclusion

This policy firstly establishes a broad, religion-friendly basis for Religion Education, taken care of by professional teachers. It also encourages the equitable practice of Religious Observances at school, and the involvement of clergy in the extra-curricular Religious Instruction of pupils, and as guest facilitators for Religion Education. In this manner the complementary, cooperative principle as regards the relationship between the state and organised religion is given substance in education, and optimised in the best interests of both spheres.

Our country has sufficient expertise and energy to meet the challenge of developing a distinctively South African approach to Religion and Education. As a matter of priority, we must deploy our intellect, imagination, talent, and human capacity in the work of creating and sustaining the relationship between Religion and Education.

Religion can contribute to creating an integrated educational community that affirms unity in diversity. In providing a unified framework for teaching and learning about religion, religions, and religious diversity, this policy on Religion and Education does not suggest that all religions are the same. Nor does it try to select from different religious traditions to try and build a new unified religion. The policy is not a project in social or religious engineering designed to establish a uniformity of religious beliefs and practices. The policy does not promote religious relativism, religious syncretism, or any other religious position in relation to the many religions in South Africa and the world. By creating a free, open space for exploration, the policy demonstrates respect for the distinctive character of different ways of life.

Like the public school, the policy on Religion and Education is designed for diversity. As we overcome the entrenched separations of the past, we are finding new ways to celebrate our different linguistic, cultural, and religious resources. We must move decisively beyond the barriers erected by apartheid; beyond the shields provided by ignorance of the other, which invariably breeds suspicion, hatred and even violence. It is time for all people of goodwill to know and understand the diversity of religious and other worldviews that are held by their fellow citizens. Every child has the right to quality education in this most important area of human development and social relations. By working together, everyone involved in education - teachers and pupils, principals and administrators, trade unions and professional associations, parents and communities - can benefit from the inter-religious knowledge and understanding cultivated through Religion and Education.

Our policy for religion in education, therefore, is designed to support unity without uniformity and diversity without divisiveness. Our public schools cannot establish the uniformity of religious education in a single faith or the divisiveness of religious education through separate programmes for a prescribed set of faiths. Neither course would advance unity in diversity. In any event, as we have established, our schools are not in the business of privileging, prescribing, or promoting any religion. Schools have a different responsibility in providing opportunities for teaching and learning about our religious diversity and our common humanity.

Although the goal of unity in diversity must be achieved within the formal learning programmes of the curriculum, our policy also has clear implications for the role of religion in the broader life of a public school. In particular, our policy clarifies the role that might be given to Religious Observances, and to Religious Instruction. This policy for Religion and Education upholds the principles of a cooperative model for relations between religion and the state, by maintaining a constitutional impartiality in the formal activities of the school, but encouraging voluntary interaction outside of this.

Thus signed this 28 Day of Sept 2022 by MJ Buthelezi  on behalf of the SGB.

"Growing KwaZulu-Natal Together"

Principal: NP Zwane; Dep. Principal: S. Alli; FP HOD: S. Ramhlal; IP/SP HoD: A Haffejee; IP/SP HoD: J Rampersadh.
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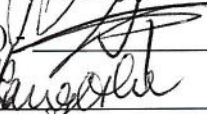
RELIGIOUS OBSERVATION POLICY

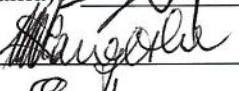
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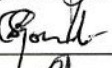
This policy was adopted by the SGB on 26/07/2022

Signatures:

SGB Chairperson (M.J Buthelezi) - 

SGB Deputy Chairperson (A. Nzama) - 

School Principal (N.P Zwane) - 

SGB Secretary (S. Govender) - 

SGB Deputy Secretary (T.M Nkosi) - 

SGB Treasurer (J. Magwaza) - 

SGB Educator Rep (N. Mvunguse) - 

SGB Parent Rep (T. Luhlangothi) - 

SGB Parent Rep (M. Ngcobo) - 

SGB Parent Rep (A. Zulu) - 

SGB Non-Educator Rep (M. Coopsamy) - 