



RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES POLICY

Date original approved:	6 December 2011	Date Policy Updated:	17/03/2021	Date of next review:	2024
Developed by:	Policy Development and Review Committee (PDRC) of the School Governing Body (SGB)				
Approved by:	School Governing Body				
Responsible body:	School Governing Body				
Supporting documents, procedures and forms for this policy:	Legislation (see below)				
References and legislation:	<p>The South African Schools Act (1996) as amended The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) Gauteng Education Policy Act, 1998 (Act No. 12 of 1998) as amended Gauteng Schools Education Act, 1995 (Act No. 6 of 1995) as amended National Policy on Religion and Education (General Notice No. 1307 of 2003) Admission of Learners to Public Schools (General Notice 4138 of 2001)</p>				
Scope:	SGB, School Management Team (SMT), Educator Staff, Learners				
Expiry date of the policy:	2024, provided there are no updates or amendments.				
Objectives of policy:	The Freedom of Religion as expressed in the Bill of Rights inspires this policy. It is framed within the principles of The South African Schools Act (1996) and the Gauteng Education Act.				

ARBOR PRIMARY SCHOOL

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES POLICY

1. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Learners – all children enrolled as learners (students) at the school.

Educators – persons employed at a school to teach / educate the learners.

Parent / Guardian – a) the parent or guardian of the learner; b) the person legally entitled to custody of a learner.

School Governing Body (SGB) – means a Governing Body contemplated in Section 16(i); (ii) S.A.S.A. Act 84/1996

SASA – South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

Principal – an Educator appointed or acting as the head of a school.

Deputy Principal – an Educator appointed as the Academic Manager of a school.

Religion – is used to describe the comprehensive and fundamental orientation in the world belief system with regard to ideas of divinity, spiritual and non-secular beliefs, the organisation thereof which is established in order to promote and protect these beliefs.

Religious Observance – activities, behaviours and practices that recognise and express the views, beliefs and commitments of a particular religion.

Freedom of conscience – refers to the freedom of an individual to consider a fact, point of view or thought, independent of others.

Religion education – describes a set of curriculum outcomes which define what a learner should know about that religion.

Freedom of religion – free from religious expression, coercion and prejudice.

Religious instruction – refers to a programme of instruction which is aimed at providing information regarding a particular set of religious beliefs with a view to promoting the inculcation and adherence thereto.

Religious holiday – any recognised day of festivities celebrated by cultural or religious communities.

Religious festival – a day or period of celebration of any cultural or religious activity that is recognised as a feature of a particular cultural or religious community.

2. THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES POLICY IS TO:

2.1. Ensure that no religious discrimination is practised at the school.

2.2. Recognise the religious and cultural diversity and promote respect and tolerance for all religions.

It recognises the rights of the learner.

3. PRINCIPLES OF THE RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES POLICY.

- 3.1. Arbor Primary is a public school therefore secular. All learners / educators shall be accorded full respect, regardless of their religious beliefs.
- 3.2. The religion policy is determined by the Governing Body of the school. It is consistent with the Constitution, the SASA and subject to approval of the Head of Department.
- 3.3. A learner in a public school has the right to religious education as provided by the curriculum.
- 3.4. A learner / educator in a public school has the right to be excused from religious observances.
- 3.5. No learner / educator at a public school shall be penalised in any way for abstaining from the religious observances of the school. Attendance is voluntary. Learners may not violate the rights of others to attend or abstain from these observances. No learners may disrupt school activities. Educators may not engage in or lead religious activities of learners during contact time.

4. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES POLICY OF ARBOR PRIMARY

- 4.1. In recognition of the religious denominations that are found in the school community and based on the fact that the majority of learners, parents and staff members at the school are Christian, the school's religious observances, in the main, will be conducted according to the Christian faith. This religious culture is adopted by the school community and is in agreement with provincial regulations.

In keeping within the democratic ethos of the school, religious observances of the following religions are also endorsed:

- 4.1.1. Judaism
- 4.1.2. Hinduism
- 4.1.3. Islam (Muslim)

4.2. Teaching of Religious Education

The nurturing of religious faith of the pupils at this school is viewed as an important function of primary school education. The universal truths contained within all the major faiths are considered paramount in developing good citizenship.

Observance of Religious Holidays

Arbor Primary follows the Gauteng Department of Education calendar. It is orientated towards Christian observances. The planning of the school terms co-ordinates with two main Christian

observances i.e. Easter and Christmas. Furthermore, the school allows for learners / educators to take the following religious days off without it being recorded as absenteeism:

Deepavali (Hindu)	2 days
Eid-UI-Adha & Eid-UI-Fitr (Muslim)	2 days
Greek Easter (Greek Orthodox)	1 day
Passover and Yom Kippur (Jewish)	2 days

- 4.3. Parents are requested to inform the homeroom teacher in writing, in advance, of the intended absence for these holy days to ensure that the child is not recorded as absent. The teacher is responsible for making academic arrangements that ensure that absence from school does not have a detrimental effect on the learner, scholastically.

Educators and administrative support staff who wish to observe a religious holiday / festival must complete the standard leave form. It is necessary to indicate that special leave is applied for, namely religious observation.

Planning for absenteeism of educators and administrative support staff due to religious holiday / festival must be completed by the end of the previous academic year and submitted to the District Director.

4.4. Assembly

General school assembly takes place weekly. The Junior school assembly is held at a different time from the Senior school assembly.

General school assemblies take place at 07:50 (end of term) and by ad hoc arrangement e.g. for Colours awards, etc.

- 4.5. Learners and staff who are not comfortable with the religious part contained within the programme for the assembly are free to absent themselves for this part. Learners will be excused from participation after a written request is received from the parents.

Learners who are excused from religious practices will be accommodated as follows:

- 4.5.1. They can sit in either a classroom or a designated and suitable area. A suitable area is one in which the learners may be observed by educators (for purpose of maintaining discipline) and that learners be protected from extreme weather conditions.

4.6. Accommodation of religious or cultural rights

Religious practices, conduct or obligation that relate to the core values and beliefs of a recognised religion and that conflict with any rule contained in this policy, will be accommodated by a deviation from this policy by the School Governing Body.

- 4.6.1. The learner, assisted by the parent, must apply for a deviation from the standard school rules if such rules conflict with or infringe on any religious right of the learner.
- 4.6.2. This application must be in writing and must identify the specific rule/s that is / are offensive to the learner's religious rights as contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.
- 4.6.3. This application must include a reasonable interpretation of the religious rights that the learner feels are offensive and a suggestion on how the rules may be supplemented by the SGB to accommodate such religious rights.
- 4.6.4. The learner must provide proof that he / she belongs to that specific religion and that the religious practices, rules and obligations that conflict with the school's policy are his / her true beliefs and commitments.
- 4.6.5. The religious conduct or practice must be lawful.
- 4.6.6. The SGB must consider the application and, if it is satisfied that the application is justified in terms of Constitutional principles, the application will be granted in writing within 14 days.
- 4.6.7. When the SGB allows the deviations from the standard rules, such deviations must be based on core religious beliefs inherent to the religion, and it must be compulsory for the learner to comply with such beliefs.
- 4.6.8. The deviation must specify the exemption from the normal rules and must clearly identify the conduct that will be allowed, e.g. the wearing of a head scarf, including colours and details of design, the growing of a beard or the wearing of a specific hairstyle or jewellery, and the conditions under which such deviation will be applicable to the learner.
- 4.6.9. Cultural rights will be considered in the event that they do not relate to a religion, if such cultural rights manifest in conduct of a permanent nature that is compulsory for the cultural group. This refers to cases where the removal of cultural jewellery or mark will cause considerable pain to the learner. Normally, cultural rights are exercised through marks and expressions of a temporary nature that are justified for a specific cultural gathering. The

learner must convince the SGB that his / her cultural rights can be exercised only through a permanent intervention.

4.6.10. Any request for a deviation from the policy based on cultural rights must be in writing and must be based on a process similar to that contained in subparagraphs 4.7.1 to 4.7.8 above.

5. PROMOTING TOLERANCE

The use of religious symbols is acceptable and must adhere to the school policy in respect of the dress code. Religious symbols may be shown as an example of religious or cultural heritage, or used as a teaching aid in the classroom.

5.1. Flexibility regarding uniforms

At the discretion of the Governing Body, Arbor Primary School will be flexible regarding scarves and long pants worn by female learners of the Muslim faith, etc. Parents, who wish to alter the standard school uniform for religious reasons, should notify the Governing Body of the school in writing.

5.2. Integration into the Subjects

In order to promote a better understanding of various religions, and the cultural differences expressed by these religions, leaders will be invited to address the learners during Life Skills lessons in the Foundation Phase, or during Personal and Social Wellbeing in the Intermediate Phase.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. The school will always endeavour to ensure that the infrastructure caters for the requirements necessary to implement the policy.

6.2. The school will always endeavour to ensure that every individual respects and implements the policy in the “Ubuntu” spirit.

MR P.A. ARENTSEN

PRINCIPAL

Name: _____

SGB CHAIRPERSON

Name: _____

DISTRICT OFFICIAL