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## **1. Purpose of the Religion Policy**

The Primary purpose of the policy is to ensure that no religious discrimination of any description is practised at the school. The policy covers the different aspects of Religion Education, Religious Instruction and Religious Observances. It will also ensure that the minority of religions in a school are accorded due respect and pride of place in the school.

Further, this policy:

- Recognises our religious and cultural diversity, and therefore promotes respect for and tolerance of all religions;
- Has to raise the dignity and status of all religions.

## **2. Principles of the Religion Policy**

- 2.1 All public schools are secular and do not have any religious orientation. All learners/educators shall be accorded full respect, regardless of their religious beliefs.
- 2.2 The Governing Body of a public school determines the religion of the school. The policy must be consistent with the Constitution, the SASA, subject to the approval of the Head of Department.
- 2.3 No form of religious discrimination may be practised in implementing (applying) the religion policy determined in accordance with the legal requirements.
- 2.4 A learner in a public school shall have the right to Religion Education as provided for in the curriculum.
- 2.5 A learner/educator in a public school shall have the right to be excused from religious observances should he/she wish to so.
- 2.6 No learner/educator at a public school or private school may be penalised (punished) in any way for abstaining (staying away) from the religious observances of the school.

### **3. Religion Policy of LAERSKOOL SELECTIONPARK**

3.1 In recognition of the religions and denominations (religious groupings) that are found among our school community and based on the fact that the majority of learners, parents and staff members at the school are of the Christian faith, 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 the provincial regulations.

It must be noted that attendance at these observances by learners and members of staff, is voluntary.

The school community has agreed that religious observances will be conducted in the following manner:

- Attendance at sermons/services will be freed and voluntary.
- Learners who choose not to attend will be involved in other activities approved by the school.
- The school hall may be used by private groups as a religious observance facility, provided that this has been sanctioned (authorised) by the SGB in terms of Section 20(2) of the SASA and the relevant conditions are met.

### **3.2 Teaching of Religion Education**

This is performed in conjunction with the Life Orientation and Social Sciences Learning Areas of in line with the current curriculum for Grades R – 7.

### **3.3 Observance of Religious Holidays**

#### **3.3.1 Observance by educators (CS) and administrative support staff (PS).**

- Educators and administrative support staff members who wish to observe religious holidays/festival must complete the standard leave form, and indicate that the leave applied for is special leave for religious observance. Maximum of three (3) days per year.
- Planning for absenteeism of educators and administrative support staff due to a religious holiday/festival must be completed by the end of the previous academic year and submitted to the District Director.

#### **3.3.2 Observance by learners**

- Learners are allowed to participate in religious holidays/festivals.
- Arrangements should be made to make sure that the affected learners are able to catch-up with their academic work/schedule.

- Parents of learners should notify the principal in writing well in advance (preferable a month) of the learners' intentions to take certain school days off for the purpose of observing religious holidays/festival. Records of these request will be kept for reference purposes.

### **3.4 Learner participation in religious activities/observances**

Learner participation in these activities is voluntary. They cannot be forced to attend. Learners have the freedom of expression but they must not violate the rights of the other learners and educators to attend these observances. Learners may not interfere with (obstruct) or disrupt school activities.

### **3.5 Educator approach and participation in religious activities/observances**

- Educator participation in these activities is voluntary.
- Educators have to be objective about religion while carrying out their duties as educators. They must treat all different religious and cultural traditions with fairness and respect.
- Educators should not engage in or lead religious activities of learners during contact time.
- Educators may neither reward nor punish learners because they agree or disagree with their religious views.

### **3.6 Assembly**

- The opening of the school assembly will consist of reading from the various scripture (of the religions endorsed above), songs of praise or a short prayer. This will take place on an equitable basis.
- It is expected that assemblies be used as forums for celebrating religious and cultural diversity, in keeping with the values of the Constitution.
- If religious materials are used at assembly, they should preferably be presented in the framework outlined for Religion Education, that is, as an educational experience rather than a religious ceremony.

## **4. Constitutional rights of Learners, Parents and Staff with Other Religious Views**

- 4.1 The rights of learners, parents and staff members to have their own religious views are honoured in this policy.
- 4.2 Learners and staff who are not comfortable with the religious part of the assembly are free to decide whether they wish to attend that part of the assembly or not.
- 4.3 Learners will be excused from participation after a written request is received from parents.

- 4.4 Learners who are excused from religious practices will be accommodated as follows:
- 4.4.1 They can attend religious practices according to their own religion if their parents request it and if someone is provided to conduct or present them.
  - 4.4.2 If they cannot attend religious practices presented by someone from their religious group, then they are allowed to sit in an allocated classroom.

## **5. Promoting Tolerance**

- 5.1 The use of religious symbols is acceptable, provided they are used as examples of religious or cultural heritage and/or used as teaching aids in the classroom.
- 5.2 Learners may wear religious attire or symbols, provided they apply to the school and provide evidence to the principal regarding the religious significance of the attire and/or symbols.

## **6. Religion and Admissions**

Criteria for admissions of learners to public schools should not unfairly discriminate against learners on the basis of their religion, thought, belief and opinion.

## **7. Conclusion**

- 7.1 The school will at all times endeavour to ensure that the infrastructure caters for the requirements necessary to implement the policy.
- 7.2 The school will at all times endeavour to ensure that every individual respects and implements the policy in the “Ubuntu” spirit.