



Fish Hoek Primary School

ESTABLISHED 1928

GRADES: Pre R - 7

RELIGION POLICY

1. THIS SCHOOL POLICY ON RELIGION IS UNDERPINNED BY:

- 1.1. The freedom of all individuals in the school to religious choice.
- 1.2. The right of all religions to practice their own religion and to be free of coercion to join any religion other than their own.
- 1.3. Tolerance towards and acceptance of all legal religions which have tenets compatible with these standards and principles.

2. WHILE RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IS FUNDAMENTAL TO THE SCHOOL'S APPROACH, IT IS POLICY THAT:

- 2.1. No individual in the school is free to indulge in proselytizing.
- 2.2. No individual pupil may overtly display physical signs or insignia of his religious beliefs while in school uniform (this restriction includes, but is not limited to, overt wearing of the Cross, Star of David, a Fez, dreadlocks, use of marijuana, etc., whether within a religious/cultural context or not, unless a concession has been granted to such pupil in terms of the concessions as stipulated in section 6 of this policy.)
- 2.3. Until such time as a formal application has been made for a personal dispensation in terms of the school's concessionary clauses, and a decision has been made in this regard and communicated in writing to the applicant, the pupil concerned will be required to continue to observe this and other codes or rules in place in the school, including the uniform code and code of conduct, without dispensation or deviation.

3. SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES AND RELIGION

- 3.1. School assemblies which have a religious flavour are acceptable insofar as they do not conflict with clauses 1.1 to 1.3 above
- 3.2. Wherever feasible/practicable, and taking into account the number of learners involved, opportunities for exclusive religious assembly time will be provided on request to accepted religions within the school context, but only in such a way that this does not impact negatively on the normal functioning of the school. (The concept "religious assembly time" may include the forming of a club or society with a specific religious focus.)

4. FORMAL APPRAISAL/EVALUATION AND RELIGION

- 4.1. Wherever feasible/practicable, the school will ensure that its timetables concerning formal evaluation/appraisal of pupil work, as well as major, whole-school cultural and sporting activities, take cognizance of the holy days of the various religious groups in the school.
- 4.2. It will ensure further that no learner is disadvantaged in his/her appraisal/evaluation outcomes, as a direct consequence of his/her having observed a religious holiday or carried out a religious practice expected of him/her by his/her religion.

5. LEAVE OR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1. Special leave with full pay may be granted to **individual state-employed educators**, in terms of the leave provisions in Circular/Regulations 1235 of 2012 (your province should

- have one), or to **SGB employees** in terms of the school's own Leave Regulations, for the observance of religious days, if those days are not designated as official school holidays.
- 5.2. Where parents require that their sons/daughters are absent from school for the observance of religious days, this will be allowed on the understanding that any absence will be motivated/requested/explained in writing by the parent, and that the obligation will be on the pupils concerned to make up any work missed as a result of such absence.
 - 5.3. The School will **endeavour to assist** those pupils whose religion requires that they observe particular religious practices during school hours, and are accommodated by aligning school breaks with the periods of religious observance.
 - 5.4. Given the wide religious diversity of the school community, it will not be the norm for the school to apply for any **further** adaptations to the formal school day, or the published school calendar, in order to accommodate the specific needs of any one religious group.

6. CONCESSIONS

The above notwithstanding, in terms of the Constitutional Court ruling in case CCT 51/06 (the so-called nose-stud case), it is recognised that the school is required to consider making exceptions to the above for sincerely held religious and cultural beliefs and practices. It will do so on the following basis, as recommended by the Court.

- 6.1. There should be no blanket distinction between religion and culture when considering a request for a concession, but at the same time the school will not be required to make concessions where there is a real possibility of disruption to the achievement and maintenance of a disciplined and purposeful school environment, and the maintenance of the quality of the learning process if an exemption is granted.
- 6.2. It is further recognised that the school must take positive measures and possibly incur additional hardships and expense in order to allow all people to participate and enjoy their rights equally, and that a mere desire to preserve uniformity is not sufficient grounds for refusing a concession.
- 6.3. In considering applications for exemptions, the school will expect the learner (or parents if the learner is too young to make a cogent case) to apply in writing for such concession and will address the aspects outlined below, which will be taken into account by the school.
- 6.4. Applying learners and their parents must attend a meeting with the governing body (or a governing body committee) in order to discuss the exemption and the possible conditions linked to the exemption, so as to limit the exemption's impact on the code of conduct as far as possible.
- 6.5. The conditions to be applied to the consideration of the application for concessions are as follows:
 - 6.5.1. The cultural or religious practice on which the application is based.
 - 6.5.2. The importance of that practice to the learner concerned.
 - 6.5.3. Whether the practice concerned is mandatory or voluntary.
 - 6.5.4. Whether the cultural or religious community concerned regards it as a practice that would normally warrant exemption from school rules.
 - 6.5.5. The extent of the exemption required (how great the required departure from school rules will be.)
 - 6.5.6. The effect of the granting of an exemption on the achievement of the "disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the maintenance of the quality of the learning process".
 - 6.5.7. In coming to a decision, the Governing Body will consult experts on the religion or culture concerned on the nature of the relevant practice.
 - 6.5.8. It will provide the parents/learner with written notification of its decision and any conditions relating to the exemption.