

PROTEA HEIGHTS ACADEMY

PROTEAHOOGTE AKADEMIE

RELIGION POLICY



POLICY REGISTER DETAILS

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| COMPILED BY | D la Grange |
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| AMENDMENT HISTORY | |

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1. PREAMBLE

Protea Heights Academy recognises the particular value of the rich and diverse religious heritage of our school community. While we acknowledge that the school has an educational responsibility for teaching and learning about religion and religions, and for promoting these. We understand that we should do so in ways that are different from the religious instruction and religious nurture provided by the home, family and religious community.

This policy has been developed with reference to the following:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996
- South African School Act, Act 84 of 1996
- Western Cape Provincial School Education Act, Act 12 of 1997
- Department of Education Report of the Ministerial Committee on Religious Education of 2003.
- Western Cape Religion in Education information Document for School

2. DEFINITIONS

‘Religion’ refers to the comprehensive and fundamental orientations in the world, with specific reference to sacred, spiritual and non-secular beliefs; requires dedication; includes organised forms of faith and certain world views, and is collectively used to refer to those organisations that have been established in order to protect and promote these beliefs.

‘Religion education’ refers to a curricular programme with clear and age-related educational objectives that the Department of Education prescribes for the teaching and learning of religion, religions and religious diversity in South Africa and the world. The study of religion must be aimed at achieving identifiable educational objectives that are in accordance with the objectives and outcomes of other learning areas, and, as with other learning areas in the curriculum, programmes in Religion Education must contribute to the development of fundamental observation, listening, reading, writing and reasoning skills.

‘Religious instruction’ refers to a programme consisting of information with regard to a specific religion, aimed at promoting adherence to that specific religion. The governing body regards the family and the faith community as the primary providers of religious instruction. The school is an educational institution that does not promote one religion over another, and therefore, religious instruction does not form part of its formal programme. However,

the school will make its facilities available for such programmes, provided that religious instruction does not interfere with the school's formal educational objectives.

'Religious observances' refer to those activities or actions that give expression to the values of a particular faith or belief, and inter alia include prayer meetings, reading from sacred texts, dress and diets. Religious observances may be conducted in the following ways:

- Voluntary, public events where the school's facilities are used for the purpose of religious observances
- Voluntary events (during school time) by the school community (learners and educators)
- Voluntary events during normal and other break times at school

3. RELIGION POLICY

The South African Schools Act (Act 94 of 1996) upholds the constitutional rights of all citizens to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion, and freedom from unfair discrimination on any grounds whatsoever, including religion, in public education institutions.

Within this constitutional framework and as a public school, we have a responsibility to promote the core values of a democratic society, through the curriculum, through extracurricular activities, and in our approach in general. These core values include equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability, and social honour.

Our policy on religion in education must be consistent with these values, and the practices of schools may be tested against the following national priorities:

Equity: The education process in general, and this policy, must aim at the development of a national democratic culture with respect for the value of all of our people's diverse cultural, religious and linguistic traditions.

Tolerance: Religion in education must contribute to the advancement of inter-religious toleration and interpersonal respect among adherents of different religious or secular worldviews in a shared civil society.

Diversity: In the interest of advancing informed respect for diversity, educational institutions have a responsibility for promoting multi-religious knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of religions in South Africa and the world.

Openness: Schools, together with the broader society, play a role in cultural formation and transmission, and educational institutions must promote a spirit of openness in which there shall be no overt or covert attempt to indoctrinate pupils into any particular belief or

religion. Accountability: As systems of human accountability, religions cultivate moral values and ethical commitments that can be recognised as resources for learning and as vital contributions to nation building.

Social Honour: While honouring the linguistic, cultural, religious or secular backgrounds of all pupils, educational institutions cannot allow the overt or covert denigration of any religion or secular world-view.

4. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

As the school acknowledges and respects the values entrenched in the Bill of Rights, the governing body ensures that the observance of all religions is respected and accommodated on an equitable basis where reasonably practicable.

Protea Heights Academy will, where possible, make provision for important holy days in regard to the setting of examinations and tests, to ensure that learners are not prejudiced by their attendance at religious observances.

Religious observances may be conducted on the school premises and during activities provided that it is conducted on an equitable basis and that attendance by learners and members of the staff is free and voluntary.

In terms of the Act, the governing body has the mandate to determine the religious observances of the school.

Educators and learners will be able to attend organised religious observances at school freely and voluntarily. The school will in no way compel educators or learners to participate in religious activities. Alternative arrangements will be made for the supervision of those learners who do not wish to attend any religious observances offered to religious groupings.

The intrinsic value of other religious groups shall however be respected and opportunity shall be given to them to participate at assemblies as well. As it is logistically impossible for the school to cater for all religious groups' requirements, a suitable alternative must be provided by the parents of the affected learners.

This policy, therefore, makes allowance for meetings of religious societies or groups, as well as 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 so under the authority

of the religious body, and would not be required to be registered with the South African Council for Educators.

Muslim learners wishing to leave the premises for prayers on a Friday and other learners wishing to observe religious meetings, must apply for permission to deviate from the normal school day from the Governing Body at the start of each year they attend the school. The learners will be allowed to leave the school at 12:15 and must return to school for academic lessons. A parent or guardian must sign the learner out each Friday. No learner will be allowed to leave the school premises on their own.

Teaching should, at all times, engender a sense of acceptance, security, and respect for learners with different values, cultural backgrounds and religious traditions.

Educators must ensure that all, irrespective of race, creed, sexual orientation, disability, language, gender, or class, feel welcome, emotionally secure, and appreciated.

5. PARTICIPATION AND COMPLAINTS

The governing body invites all learners and their parents to consult with the school principal or the governing body if no provision is made for the observance of their specific religious beliefs in the school. The school governing body will as far as practicable provide facilities and opportunities for the observance of these religious practices equal to those provided to other religions at the school. The establishment of such opportunities will take place in conjunction with those learners, parents and the religious communities to which they belong.

If any teacher, learner and/or parent has a conscientious objection against the observance of certain religious practices in the school, or feel that participation in certain practices is not voluntary, they are requested to bring this to the governing body's attention.

6. CONCLUSION

Our policy for religion in education, therefore, is designed to support unity without uniformity, and diversity without divisiveness.

7.APPROVAL AND ADOPTION

This Religion policy was approved and adopted by the Protea Heights Academy

Governing Body on _____ (date)

SIGNED:

CHAIRPERSON: _____ DATE:

PRINCIPAL: _____ DATE:

SECRETARY: _____ DATE: