

EXCELSIOR

PRIMARY SCHOOL



RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES POLICY

(REVISED AND APPROVED BY SGB IN 2024)

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1. Introduction

This policy is compiled in accordance with the following legislation and amendments:

- 1.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996).
- 1.2 National Education Policy (Act 27 of 1996) and amendments.
- 1.3 South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) and amendments.
- 1.4 National Policy on Religion and Education.
- 1.5 Western Province Provincial School Education Act 1997 (Section 44).
- 1.6 Department of Basic Education Circular 01/LEG/2018.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this religion policy is to:

- 2.1. Recognise that everyone has a Constitutional right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, and opinion.
- 2.2. Ensure that there are no practices at the school that discriminate against learners, their families, or staff on the basis of religion, beliefs, and opinion.
- 2.3. Ensure that minority religions, beliefs, and opinions in the school are protected and respected and accorded the dignity and status equivalent to the majority religion in the school.
- 2.4. Describe how various aspects relating to religion will be accommodated in the school.

3. Principles

- 3.1. The school accepts the Constitutional right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, and opinion and its obligation to ensure this right is respected by all members of the school community.
- 3.2. Recognising the diversity of religions, beliefs, opinions, and cultures of the school community, the school accepts its obligation to promote the core values of a democratic society.
- 3.3. The school will exercise its right to allow religious observances on an equitable basis and attendance at them will be free and voluntary.
- 3.4. The school will not tolerate discrimination against any person based on his/her religion, belief, or opinion.
- 3.5. The school will act against any person who fails to adhere to this religion policy using appropriate strategies provided in terms of school policies and codes or South African law.
- 3.6. Parents are expected to assist the school in its adherence to this policy by, for example
 - a. informing the school of dates of religious holidays/holy days/festivals at the time that the school year plan is drawn up in October of the preceding year, and
 - b. informing the school of dietary and other necessary requirements relating to a learner's religion.

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- 3.7 No learner, staff member, parent or visitor may attempt to impose a religious belief or opinion on another person, except where the person's participation is free and voluntary in a gathering exclusively for one religion, belief, or opinion.

4. Application and scope of the policy

- 4.1. This policy applies to all learners, parents, and staff of the school.
- 4.2. Visitors to the school, including education department officials, and representatives of faith-based organisations and political parties are required to respect the Constitutional right to freedom of religion, belief and opinion and the principles of this policy while on the school premises or during a school activity.

5. Responsibilities of the SGB

- 5.1. The SGB, in conjunction with the school's management, is responsible for developing and monitoring the implementation of the SRP and must do so in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including leaders of faith-based organisations.
- 5.2. The policy will be reviewed every three years and when there are changes in legislation or interpretation of the legislation.
- 5.3. Where necessary, the SGB will assist the principal when action must be taken following breaches of this policy.

6. Responsibilities of the Principal

- 6.1. The principal must ensure that the school community is educated regarding the SRP and that the policy is implemented and adherence to it is monitored.
- 6.2. The principal is responsible for instituting action against any person who acts in contravention of the policy using the appropriate disciplinary and other legal remedies. Where necessary, the SGB's assistance will be required.

7. Religion Observances Policy Details

7.1 Religion education

- a. The school implements the prescribed Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for Grades R - 7 which includes religion education topics within the Life Skills and Life Orientation curriculums.
- b. Therefore, participation in religion education is not voluntary as religion education is part of the CAPS and no religious instruction is permitted.
- c. Religion education is taught by qualified and SACE registered educators during the formal school day.
- d. Educators must ensure that the religious interests of all learners are protected.

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- e. Educators of religion education may share their religious identity and expand on matters related to their own religious identity when asked but may not promote their own religion, beliefs, and opinions.

7.2 Religious instruction

- a. By arrangement with the principal, religious organisations and school religious clubs are permitted, on an equitable basis, to conduct extra-curricular religious instruction activities on the school premises.
- b. By arrangement with the principal, religious instruction activities, religious societies and gatherings may be permitted on the school premises during break times on condition that they do not extend beyond the break times.
- c. Religious instruction may be conducted by staff members or by external persons accredited by faith communities and who have been cleared to work with children. If a teacher is not present in the venue where the instruction takes place, each learner in attendance must have produced a consent form from his/her parent to participate in the activities.
- d. Participation in religious instruction must be free and voluntary.

7.3 Religious observances at school

- a. Learners and staff may be excused, on grounds of freedom of conscience and religion, from attending the religious observance component of any school assembly, function, or gathering.
- b. Learners who choose not to participate in religious observances will be supervised in a designated venue by a teacher or a qualified and responsible person.
- c. Religious gatherings:
 - i. On an equitable basis, the school may during school hours hold a gathering to observe the religious holiday/holy day/festival of a particular religion. Learners, their families, and faith leaders of the religion may be asked to participate in the organisation and running of the event.
 - ii. The purpose of the gathering would be to teach all members of the school community about the significance of the religious holiday/holy day/festival and how it is observed.
 - iii. The gathering may not be used to convert persons who are not members of the religion that is being recognised.
- d. Uniform, dress, and the wearing of religious symbols:
 - i. The school uniform rules provide for learners to select from a choice of clothing items such that members of all religions will be able to comply with uniform rules.
 - ii. As far as possible, the dress code for staff places no restrictions on staff members wearing attire relating to their religion, including the wearing of religious symbols. However, this needs to be done within the parameters of the Code of Conduct for Staff as to set an example to the learners.
 - iii. If it is compulsory for members of a religion to wear a religious symbol, learners may do so without requesting a concession. However, as learners are wearing a uniform, they are requested to wear these discreetly.



e. Catering:

- i. Where it is possible, the dietary needs of different religions will be catered for at all school events and tours.
- ii. Parent committees representing religious groups will be asked to assist the school so that the requirements are understood and can be catered for.

7.4 School times

- a. The times of the school day have been determined to ensure that the required number of hours teaching time per week. No further school times or class timetables can be made.

7.5 Additional concessions for religious or cultural reasons

- a. This policy and the Code of Conduct for Learners provide as far as possible for the necessary religious observances of learners and staff members.
- b. Where a person requires further concessions, the staff member or parent of a learner must apply to the SGB through the principal, stating the grounds for requiring additional concessions.
- c. The principal will not unreasonably withhold permission but will do so if the concession is likely to disrupt the disciplined and purposeful school environment or impact on the quality of the learning experience.

7.6 School activities during religious holidays/holy days/festivals

- a. As far as possible, educators will not teach new work on religious holidays/holy days/festivals. They will inform the learners in advance of what will be covered and provide learning materials and reasonable assistance to help them catch up any missed work.
- b. As far as possible, formal assessments will not be conducted on religious holidays/holy days/festivals and testing, and examination timetables will take note of these days.
- c. Major school events, parent meetings, and whole-school sporting and cultural activities will not be scheduled on religious holidays/holy days/festivals unless this cannot be avoided.

7.7 Absence from school on days not designated school holidays for observance of religious holidays/holy days/festivals

- a. Parents of learners and members of staff may request leave of absence to observe religious holidays/holy days/festivals.
- b. To assist with planning, this school requires all staff to notify the principal in the first week of the school of the dates when they will require leave for religious observance. In the case where dates are not definite, the approximate dates must be provided.
- c. Learners are required to produce an absentee letter on the day they return to school.

7.8 School closure for observance of religious holidays/holy days/festivals or practise of religious duties

- a. The school will not request permission to close the school for observance of religious holidays/holy days/festivals unless it will be impossible to manage the school safely because of the number of staff members who will be absent.



- b. Once the times of the school day or timetable have been determined, it will not be adapted further to meet the needs of learners or staff to practise their religious duties.

7.9 Use of school facilities by religious groups

- a. The governing body may allow religious groups to use the school facilities for religious observances. This will be done on an equitable basis. A fee may be charged for the use of the facilities. Activities must be conducted within the rules specified in the use agreement.

7.10 Display of religious symbols

- a. Religious symbols may be displayed for educational purposes only in the classrooms of educators who teach religion education and then only on an equitable basis.
- b. Religious groups that have been permitted to use the school facilities for religious instruction of learners during break or after school must remove any religious symbols or religious material from the venue after use thereof.
- c. Groups hiring the school facilities must adhere to the terms of the use agreement which will include the removal of all religious material after use of the facilities.

7.11 Religion policy and promotion of the core values of a democratic society

- a. Through this religion policy the school aims to promote the core values as defined in the paragraph 14 of the NPR, namely: equity, tolerance, diversity, openness, accountability, and social honour.

8. Conclusion

This religion policy aims to enable members of the school community to be educated about and celebrate diversity without creating divisions. Unity of the school community is promoted without requiring uniformity.

This document may be amended by the compiling parties as and when deemed necessary.

Revised and approved by the School Governing Body of Excelsior Primary School.

Signed at **BELLVILLE** on this **28th** day of **MAY 2024**.

Chairperson:

Mrs L. Taylor

School Principal:

Mr E. Pio

Educator:

Mrs M. Rose

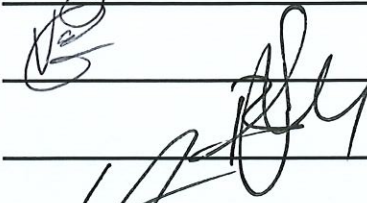
Educator:

Mrs C. Fourie

Non-educator:

Mrs M. Crous



Parent:	Mrs C. Broughton	
Parent:	Mrs V. Gilbert	
Parent:	Mr R. Maphike	
Parent:	Mr W. Stark	


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