



## RIDGEVALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

**DISTRICT: JW**

### TITLE: POLICY ON RELIGION POLICY AT RIDGEVALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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## **1. Preamble**

Ridgevale Primary School 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 religions, and for promoting these, we understand that we should do so in ways that are different from the religious instructions and religious nurture provided by the home, family and religious community. The spirit of this policy is to embrace the religious diversity of Ridgevale Primary School and South Africa.

## **2. Legislative Framework**

1. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) (Act 108 of 1996) (Section 9 of 15)
2. South African Schools Act 84 of 1998 (Act 84 of 1996), as amended and Act 94 of 1996
3. National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996, as amended
4. Gauteng School's Education Act 6 of 1995, as amended
5. National Policy on Religion and Education (General Notice No. 1307 Of 2013)
6. National Policy on Religion and Education (General Notice No 1307 of 2003)

## **3. Scope**

School Management Team, SGB. Staff and Learners

## **4. Purpose**

- 4.1 To develop a democratic respect for our country's diverse cultural and religious traditions.
- 4.2 To ensure that all at Ridgevale Primary School, irrespective of race, creed, sexual orientation, disability, language, gender or class feel appreciated.
- 4.3 To ensure that the teaching of Religion education be sensitive to religious interests and that individuals and groups are protected from ignorance, stereotypes, caricatures and denigration.
- 4.4 To ensure that there are no discriminatory practices amongst learners and staff based on religious beliefs and orientation to a particular faith or religion.
- 4.5 Promote tolerance and unity among staff through diversity of religious practices and beliefs existing in the school community.
- 4.6 Ensure that minority religions in school are protected and respected and afforded the dignity and status equivalent to the majority religion in the school.
- 4.7 Describe the nature and content of the following aspects of religion accommodated for in the school:
  - a. religious observance;
  - b. freedom of conscience;

- c. freedom of religion;
- d. religion education;
- e. religious instruction;
- f. religious holidays;
- g. religious festivals;
- h. religion and admissions, and
- i. closure of school

## 5. Definitions and acronyms

### 5.1

TERM	DEFINITION
Religion	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 are 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
Freedom of religion	Freedom to practice a religion of choice
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 organised 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
School day	Refers to that portion of each day in which it is compulsory for teachers to be at school. It entails the 7 hours contract time that is expected of teachers and learners, including

	breaks, compulsory activities, assembly and extra-mural activities
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## 5.2 Acronyms

Acronyms	Explanation
SGB	School Governing Body
HoD	Provincial Head of Education Department
MEC	Member of the Executive Council

## 6. Policy Statements

### 6.1 Freedom of conscience

- No person at Ridgevale Primary School shall attempt to indoctrinate learners into any particular belief or religion nor denigrate any religion.
- In this regard, the Department of Education shall respect the right and duties of the parents to provide direction to their children in the exercise of their rights as learners, in a manner consistent with evolving capacity of children concerned.
- The SGB recognises the right of teachers and non-teachers to freedom of conscience and will not impose duties or responsibilities on staff without their consent.

### 6.2 Learner participation in religious observances

- Learner participation in these activities is free and voluntary. Learners cannot be forced to attend or to violate the rights of other learners and teachers to attend these observances.
- The school will provide supervision in the event that a learner does not wish to participate in religious observances.
- Parents may seek permission from the school in writing for their children to participate in religious festivities, religious holidays, commemoration days, initiation, mourning rituals and prayer times.

### 6.3 Teacher participation in religious observances

- Teacher participation in these activities is free and voluntary.
- Teachers have to be objective about religion while carrying out their duties as teachers.  
They must treat all different religions and cultural traditions with fairness and respect.
- Teachers should not engage in or lead religious activities of learners during contact time.
- Teachers may neither reward or punish learners because they agree or disagree with their (teacher's) religious views.

## 6.4 **Freedom of religion**

### 6.4.1 **Observance of religious holidays and festivals by learners**

- a. Learners are allowed to participate in religious holidays/festivals and will NOT be marked absent.
- b. Arrangements should be made to make sure that the affected learners are able to catch-up with their academic work/schedule.
- c. Parents of learners should notify the Principal in writing well in advance of the learners' intention to take certain school days off for the purpose of observing religious holidays.
- d. Records of these requests will be kept for reference purposes.

### 6.4.2 **Observance of religious holidays and festivals by teachers and non-teacher staff**

- a. Teachers and non-teaching staff who wish to observe a religious holiday/festival must complete a leave form and indicate that the leave applied for is special leave for religious observance.
- b. Religious observances may not exceed three (3) working days per year for teachers.
- c. Planning for absenteeism of teachers and non-teaching staff due to religious holiday/festival must be completed 90 days prior to the intended leave and submitted to the District Director.

### 6.4.3 **Dietary Requirements**

- a. The school tuckshop will endeavour to provide food suitable for all religious groups.
- b. During the hosting of school functions the school will encourage its members (learners, staff and parents) to provide suitable food for their respective Communities.

### 6.4.4 **Religious instruction**

- a. Religious instruction will not form part of the official syllabus but opportunity will be created for religious observances in the form of official openings, invited speakers and discussion groups.
- b. Religious instructors from different religions may be invited to address the learners on religious issues. Learners would then be free to ask any questions on the issues addressed by these invited guests.
- c. Attendance of such events will be free and voluntary.
- d. Religious instruction will not form part of the official syllabus, but opportunity will be created for religious observance in the form of:
  - Official openings;
  - Commencement of a function;
  - Scripture reading and prayer (at the start of a school day; example in the staffroom by teachers);

- Singing of devotional songs;
- Show of videos on religious themes; and
- Invited guest speakers on religious matters.

### 6.5 Religion Education

- a. The Life Skills curriculum should purposefully pursue the moral and ethical development of learners whilst learning about the various religions and beliefs that exist to the exclusion.
- b. Religious education is a programme for studying about religion in all its many forms without promoting any particular religion or faith.
- c. The content directs that the learners develop the capacity to respect the rights of others and to appreciate cultural diversity and different belief systems.

### 6.6 Closure of School

- a. Early closure of the school to attend a religious service may be permitted, provided it is within regular contact time and is approved by the District Director.
- b. Where a religious holiday/festival will result in large numbers and teachers being absent from school on a particular day, the school may consider closing for that specific day.
- c. Application for closure should reflect wide and representative consultation with the parent community. The request should include the details of how the school will make up for the lost time resulting from the celebration of a religious holiday/festival.
- d. If consultation does not result in consensus regarding the closure of the school, then the procedures in respect of withdrawal of individual learners from the school by their parents will apply.
- e. The school must obtain written approval from the Head of Department of the Gauteng Department of Education well in advance.
- f. Granting permission for school closure will only be considered if the total number of school days for the year is not reduced.

### 6.7 Religious attire and symbols

- a. The school should not single out an attire of a particular religion, for prohibition or regulation, provided the attire does not symbolise practices that are in conflict with the Constitution. This included crosses and crucifixes, hats/topees and head scarves, yarmulkes, dreadlocks, nose rings, etc.
- b. Learners may wear religious attire and symbols, provided they submit a written request to the Principal regarding the religious significance of the attire and/or symbols.

### 6.8 School activities during religious holidays/festivals:

Consideration should be given to the scheduling of the following activities during religious holidays/festivals to allow for maximum participation at these events and assessments:

- a. Sporting activities/competitions
- b. Cycle tests/examination; and
- c. Educational excursions

## 6.9 Religion and admissions

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

## 7. Principles of Religion Policy

### 7.1 Religion Policy

As a public school, we have the constitutional responsibility to promote the core values of a democratic society, through curriculum, extra-curricular activities and in our approach in general. This core values include equity, tolerance, openness and accountability.

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

**Tolerance:** Religion in education must contribute to the advancement of inter-religious tolerance 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, as an educational institution we have a responsibility to promote 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 we must promote a spirit of openness in which there shall be no overt or covert attempt to indoctrinate into any particular belief or religion.

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

## 8. Procedure to change the official religion policy of Ridgevale Primary School

8.1 The following procedure will apply when the School Governing Body would like to motivate/request a change in the Religion Policy of Ridgevale Primary School.

- a. An official request, in writing, must be submitted to the school Governing Body Chairman by a parent(s) whose children are currently enrolled at Ridgevale Primary School.

- b. Upon receipt of the request the issue will be discussed by the School Governing Body and tabled at the next Annual General Meeting for discussion and voting by the Parent Body.
- c. If the parent body votes in favour of the change, the School Governing Body will apply to the Department of Education to change the Religion Policy of Ridgevale Primary School.

## **9. Values**

### **9.1 Ridgevale Primary School promotes the following values:**

- Commitment
- Respect
- Honesty (integrity)
- Responsibility
- Friendship
- Tolerance
- Helpfulness
- Loyalty
- Perseverance
- Self-control
- Excellence
- Gratitude

9.2 The values are emphasized at all times and expanded upon during assemblies.

## **10. Conclusion**

10.1 The primary purpose of the Religion Policy is to clarify Ridgevale Primary's position on religion in provision of education to our learners in line with the constitutional requirements of the Republic of South Africa and the South African's School Act.

## **Conclusion**

Ridgevale Primary School has a responsibility in providing opportunities for teaching and learning about our religious diversity and our common humanity. Our policy therefore, is developed to ensure that through our diversity we develop a unity of purpose and a spirit that recognises diversity.