



# Sunridge Circle Primary

## Religious Observation Policy

### Preamble

This document is the religious policy of and rules for religious observances at Sunridge Circle Primary School, as approved by the governing body. The religious policy and rules acknowledge the fundamental values entrenched in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; the applicable provisions of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 ("Schools Act"), and the provincial legislation applicable to this school.

Section 15(1) of the Constitution provides that every person has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion.

Furthermore, section 15(2) provides that religious observances by state or state-aided institutions may be conducted, provided that:

- (a) such observances adhere to the rules stipulated by the relevant public authority;
- (b) they are conducted equitably; and
- (c) attendance is free and voluntary.

Sunridge Circle Primary School acknowledges that (a) the abovementioned rights are not absolute and may be restricted by section 36 of the Constitution, and (b) such rights are indeed restricted by a court order that declared it in violation of section 7 of the Schools Act for a public school to (i) promote or allow its staff to promote the school as adhering to a single or predominantly a single religion to the exclusion of others, and (ii) hold out that it promotes the interests of any one religion over others.

The Policy is conducted on an equitable basis.

The school welcomes all learners, irrespective of their individual religious beliefs, and will endeavour to create opportunities for the observance of such beliefs at all reasonable times, whether as a group or on an individual basis, such as dietary requirements or attending religious observances away from school.

Sunridge Circle Primary School undertakes to ensure that each representative religion at the school is dealt with on an equitable basis, and to ensure the promotion of religious diversity.

## 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

### **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.

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.

Religion education will take place in accordance with the National Policy on Religion and Education. This education forms part of the learning area Life Orientation. The school takes note that the curriculum exposes its learners to all the major religions prevalent in South Africa.

No educator will be forced to provide religion education.

The school will promote and enhance understanding of and respect for religious diversity as far as reasonably practicable.

### **1. SCHOOL POLICY ON RELIGION**

We endeavour to allow the following:

- 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 (to induce someone to convert to one's own religious faith).
- 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 the Code of Conduct.
- 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 must promote values and build on character education.
- 3.2 No religious messages are allowed.

#### **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 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.
- 5.2 The School will endeavour to assist that those pupils whose religion requires that they observe religious practices during school hours, are accommodated by aligning school breaks with the periods of religious observance.
- 5.3 Absence from school on days not designated school holidays for observance of religious holidays/holy days/festivals
  - 5.3.1 Parents of learners and members of staff may request leave of absence to observe religious holidays/holy days/festivals.
  - 5.3.2 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.
  - 5.3.3 Learners are required to produce an absentee letter on the day they return to school.

#### **6. CONCESSIONS AND DEVIATION**

Religious practices, conduct or obligations that relate to the core values and beliefs of a recognised religion and that are in conflict with any rule contained in this Code of Conduct will be accommodated by a deviation from this Code of Conduct by the Governing Body under the following conditions

- 6.1 The pupil, assisted by the parent, must apply for a deviation from the standard School rules if such rules are in conflict with or infringe on any religious right of the pupil.
- 6.2 This application must be in writing and must identify the specific rule/s that is/are offensive to the pupil's religious right/s as contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.
- 6.3 This application must include a reasonable interpretation of the religious rights that the pupil feels are offended and a suggestion on how the rules may be supplemented by the Governing Body to accommodate such religious rights.

- 6.4 The pupil must provide proof that s/he belongs to that specific religion and that the religious practices, rules and obligations that are in conflict with the School's Code of Conduct are his/her true beliefs and commitments.
- 6.5 The religious conduct or practice must be lawful.
- 6.6 The Governing Body must consider the application and, if it is satisfied that the application is justified in terms of Constitutional principles, the application will be granted in writing.
- 6.7 When the Governing Body allows for deviations from the standard rules, such deviations must be based on core religious beliefs inherent to the religion, and it must be compulsory for the pupil to comply with such beliefs.
- 6.8 The deviation must specify the extent of the exemption from the normal rules and must clearly identify the conduct that will be allowed – e.g. the wearing of a head scarf, including colours and details of design; the growing of a beard; or the wearing of a specific hairstyle or jewellery – and the conditions under which such deviation will be applicable to the pupil.
- 6.9 Cultural rights will be considered in the event that they do not relate to a religion, if such cultural rights manifest in conduct of a permanent nature that is compulsory for the cultural group. This refers to cases where the removal of the cultural jewellery or mark will cause considerable pain to the pupil.
- 6.10 Normally, cultural rights are exercised through marks and expressions of a temporary nature that are justified for a specific cultural gathering. The pupil must convince the Governing Body that his/her cultural rights can be exercised only through a permanent intervention.
- 6.11 Any request for a deviation from the Code of Conduct based on cultural rights must be in writing and must be based on a process similar to that contained in subparagraphs 1 to 8 above.
- 6.12 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.
- 6.13 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.

**POLICY APPROVAL**

	<b>DESIGNATION</b>	<b>DATE</b>
<b>PRINCIPAL</b>	<i>Law</i>	2024.06.04
<b>SGB CHAIR</b>	<i>Antonia</i>	2024.06.04
<b>REVUE DATE</b>	2026.06.04	