

Glenstantia Primary School



Religion Policy

Date approved		Date Policy will take effect		Date of next review	Annually
Developed by	Policy Development and Review Committee (PDRC) of the School Governing Body (SGB)				
Approved by	School Governing Body (SGB)				
Responsible Body	School Governing Body (SGB)				
Supporting documents, procedures and forms for this policy	Legislation (see Below)				
References and Legislation	<p>The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) (Act 108 of 1996), as amended</p> <p>South African Schools Act 84 of 1998 (Act No 84 of 1996), as amended</p> <p>National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996, as amended</p> <p>Gauteng Schools Education Act No 6 of 1995, as amended</p> <p>National Policy on Religion and Education (General Notice No 1307 of 2013)</p> <p>National Policy on Religion and Education (General Notice No 1307 of 2003)</p>				
Scope	SGB, School Management Team (SMT), Educator Staff, Learners				
Expiry date of policy	This policy remains in force until replaced by a policy revised and approved by the SGB.				

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1. PURPOSE OF THE RELIGION POLICY

To develop a democratic respect of our country's diverse cultural and religious traditions.

Everyone involved with Glenstantia Primary School will feel comfortable that their rights are respected.

This policy describes the nature and content of the following aspects of religion accommodated in the school:

- a. religious observances
- b. freedom of conscience
- c. freedom of religion
- d. religion education
- e. religious instruction
- f. religious holidays; and
- g. religious festivals
- h. closure of the school
- i. religion and admissions

2. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

2.1 Definitions

Term	Definition
Religion	Is 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 organization thereof which are established in order to promote and protect these beliefs.
Religious Observance	Activities, behaviours and practices that recognize 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 recognized 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 recognized 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 and learners to be at school. It entails the 7 hours contact time that is expected of Teachers and learners, including breaks, compulsory activities, assembly and extra-mural activities.

2.2 Acronyms

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

3. POLICY STATEMENTS

3.1 Freedom of conscience

- (a) No person employed at Glenstantia Primary School shall attempt to indoctrinate learners into any particular belief or religion nor denigrate any religion.
- (b) In this regard, the Department 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 the evolving capacity of children concerned.
- (c) The School Governing Body recognizes the right of teachers and non-teachers to freedom of conscience and will not impose duties or responsibilities on staff without their consent.

3.2 Learner participation in religious observances

- (a) 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.
- (b) The school will provide supervision in the event that a learner does not wish to participate in religious observances. Should the parent wish to provide a practitioner to facilitate the supervisory period, the school will provide a venue for this purpose.
- (c) 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.

3.3 Teacher participation in religious observances

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

3.4 Freedom of religion

3.4.1 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' intentions to take certain school days off for the purpose of observing religious holidays/festivals.
- (d) Records of these requests will be kept for reference purposes.

3.4.2 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 by the end of the previous academic year and submitted to the District Director.

3.4.3 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.

3.4.4 Religious instruction

- 3.4.4 (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.
- 3.4.4 (b) Religious instructors from different religions may be invited to address the learners on religious issues. Learners would then be free to ask questions on the issues addressed by these invited guest speakers.
- 3.4.4 (c) Attendance of such events will be free and voluntary.

3.5 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) Religion education is a programme for studying about religion in all its many forms without promoting any particular religion or faith.

3.6 Closure of school

- (a) Early closure of the school to attend a religious service may be permitted, provided it is within regulated contact time and is approved by the District Director.
- (b) Where a religious holiday/festival will result in large numbers of learners 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 of permission for school closure will only be considered if the total number of school days for the year is not reduced.

3.7 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 symbolize practices that are in conflict with the Constitution. This included crosses and crucifixes, hats/topes and head scarves, yarmulkes, dreadlocks, nose rings, etc.
- (b) Learners may wear religious attire or symbols, provided they apply to the school and provide evidence to the Principal regarding the religious significance of the attire and/or symbols.

3.8 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

3.9 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.

4. SHORT TITLE

This policy shall be called Religion Policy of Glenstantia Primary School.

5. PRINCIPLES OF THE RELIGION POLICY

- 5.1 Religious observances of all religions will be accorded due respect as Glenstantia Primary School recognizes the religious and cultural diversity of its population.
- 5.2 The Governing Body of Glenstantia Primary School shall determine the Religion Policy of the school.
- 5.3 The Policy will be consistent with the required legislation, subject to the submission to the Head of Department.
- 5.4 Religion Education will be conducted as stipulated by the Curriculum.

6. PROCEDURE TO CHANGE THE OFFICIAL RELIGION POLICY OF GLENSTANTIA PRIMARY SCHOOL

- 6.1 The following procedure will apply when the Parent Body would like to motivate/request a change in the Religion Policy of Glenstantia Primary school:
- (i) An official request, in writing, must be submitted to the School Governing Body Chairman by a parent(s) whose child/ren are currently enrolled at Glenstantia Primary School.
 - (ii) 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.
 - (iii) 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 Glenstantia Primary School.

7. RELIGION POLICY OF GLENSTANTIA PRIMARY SCHOOL

- 7.1 In recognition of the religions and denominations (religious groupings) that are found at Glenstantia Primary School, the Governing Body of this school has decided that no religion shall be promoted by the school to the exclusion of any other religion followed, practiced or exercised by any learner or parent of the school.
- 7.1.1 However, there shall be no prohibition or unreasonable restriction against any learner or a group of learners from exercising or following a particular religion at the school.
- 7.1.2 No teacher shall be prohibited or restricted from joining or assisting such learner or group of learners in exercising, practicing or following such religion or be compelled to join or assist such learner or group.
- 7.2 However, freedom of conscience and religion shall be protected and encouraged.
- 7.3 Books of religious instruction e.g. Bible may be read at formal school assemblies and school gatherings as part of the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and option.
- 7.4 Learners who do not wish to attend or participate in religious observances need a letter from their parents requesting that they be excused from participation and this is guided by section 3.2 of this policy.
- 7.5 All persuasions will be respected and where possible, representation of the other religions will be invited to participate in the assemblies.

7.6 The School Hall may be used by private groups as a religious observance facility, provided that this has been sanctioned by the SGB in terms of Section 20 (2) of the SASA and the relevant conditions are met.

8. VALUES

8.1 Glenstantia Primary School promotes the following values:

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

8.2 These values are emphasized at all times and expanded upon during assemblies and a values period for Foundation Phase.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The primary purpose of the Religion Policy is to clarify Glenstantia'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 Schools Act.

SIGNED BY

Chairperson of the SGB: _____ Date:

The Principal: _____ Date:

IDSO: _____ Date: