



POLICY ON RELIGION

RECORD MANAGEMENT					
Document Name POL 1.0 – RBHS – Religion Policy V201808					
Revision Number	Date Published	Synopsis	Owner	Role	Retention
V201808	August 2018	As adopted by the Governing Body	Sarah Grobler	Member of the Board and Company Secretary	5 years from adoption

This policy will be next reviewed during: **August 2022**



Reference number POL 1.0
Version number V201808
Version date August 2018
Type of document Policy

Policy on Religion

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. PURPOSE	3
2. CONTEXT	3
3. DIRECTIVE	4
3.1. FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS CHOICE	4
3.2. FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE.....	4
3.3. RBHS RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND OBSERVANCES	4
3.4. PREVALENT MAJOR RELIGIONS	4
3.5. ACCEPTANCE	4
4. ASSEMBLIES	5
5. APPRAISALS AND EVALUATIONS	5
6. LEAVE OR ABSENCE	5
7. CONCESSIONS	6
8. RESPONSIBILITIES	8
8.1. BOARD OF GOVERNORS	8
8.2. HEADMASTER	8
9. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	8
10. ADOPTION	8



Reference number	POL 1.0
Version number	V201808
Version date	August 2018
Type of document	Policy

Policy on Religion

1. PURPOSE

The Board of Governors (Board) places ethical behaviour and good governance at the centre of its culture. The governance of **religious activities** is a fundamental component of this practice to ensure the long-term sustainability of Rondebosch Boys' High School (RBHS). The purpose of this policy is to communicate their directive in this regard, together with criteria, procedures and responsibilities the Board has determined are required for the governance and management of religious activities at RBHS.

2. CONTEXT

The following provides the policy's context and the basis of formulation:

2.1. RBHS is committed to the precepts as set out in Section 15 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa regarding freedom of religion, belief and opinion, which read as follows:

- “(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion.
(2) Religious observances may be conducted at state or state-aided institutions, provided that—
(a) those observances follow rules made by the appropriate public authorities;
(b) they are conducted on an equitable basis; and
(c) attendance at them is free and voluntary.”

2.2. A recent High Court ruling¹ has determined that it offends Section 7 of the South African Schools Act, for a public school:

- “(i) to promote or allow its staff to promote that it, as a public school, adheres to only one or predominantly only one religion to the exclusion of others; and
(ii) to hold out that it promotes the interests of any one religion in favour of others.”

2.3. RBHS would like to foster an environment where understanding of difference and diversity is furthered, with a goal of preparing its scholars for life in a multicultural society through understanding practices of the major religions and belief systems in South Africa.

2.4. An atmosphere of open discussion and sharing of ideas amongst those with different religious or non-religious viewpoints at RBHS is encouraged, provided that it is done in such a way which respects the rights of individuals to decide for themselves what they believe without coercion or pressure.

2.5. Having regard to the context set out above RBHS has adopted the following policy set out below regarding religion.

¹ Organisasie vir Godsdiensteonderrig en Demokrasie v Laerskool Randhart & Others (29847/2017(2017) ZACPJHC 160 (27 June 2017)



Reference number	POL 1.0
Version number	V201808
Version date	August 2018
Type of document	Policy

Policy on Religion

3. DIRECTIVE

Having regard to this Context, the Board has adopted the following directive:

3.1. Freedom of religious choice

All scholars and staff at RBHS have freedom of religious choice.

3.2. Freedom of religious practice

All religions and adherents of any religion are free to practise their own religion and to be free of coercion to join any religion other than their own.

3.3. RBHS religious practices and observances²

RBHS has the right to offer religious practices and observances which are the most appropriate for RBHS, provided that any decision around appropriateness is taken in an equitable manner, and is done in a way which does not give rise to indirect coercion of the scholars or staff who do not believe in a particular religion.

3.4. Prevalent major religions

This policy is underpinned by a belief in the broad religious, moral and ethical values, standards and principles espoused by the prevalent major religions in South Africa.

3.5. Acceptance

RBHS accepts that:

- 3.5.1. All legal religions which have tenets compatible with these values, standards and principles have a right to be celebrated rather than simply tolerated.
- 3.5.2. No person employed at RBHS shall denigrate any religion or non-religious belief system.
- 3.5.3. Every scholar and employee at RBHS shall have the right to participate or not to participate in religious practices at RBHS.
- 3.5.4. Any religious practices or observances in RBHS are to be conducted on an equitable basis.
- 3.5.5. Participation in such religious practices or observances in RBHS is free and voluntary.
- 3.5.6. Compulsory participation at RBHS prayers infringes upon freedom of religion.

² The concept religious observances may include the forming of a club or society with voluntary attendance or ad hoc courses or events with a specific religious focus.



Reference number	POL 1.0
Version number	V201808
Version date	August 2018
Type of document	Policy

Policy on Religion

4. ASSEMBLIES

- 4.1. At RBHS, assemblies are considered an integral part of school life and are compulsory. Although assemblies may have a religious flavour, assemblies are conducted in a manner which conforms to the principles set out in this policy. These observances are conducted on an equitable basis and participation in these religious observances by scholars and members of staff is free and voluntary.
- 4.2. Opportunities for exclusive religious observances will be provided on request to the various religions within RBHS, provided that it is feasible or practical to do so, but only in such a way that this does not impact negatively on the normal functioning of RBHS.

5. APPRAISALS AND EVALUATIONS

- 5.1. Wherever feasible and practicable, RBHS will ensure that its timetables concerning formal appraisals or evaluations of scholar work, as well as major, whole-school cultural and sporting activities, take cognisance of the holy days of the various religious groups in RBHS.
- 5.2. RBHS will ensure further that no scholar is disadvantaged in their appraisal or evaluation outcomes, as a direct consequence of their having observed a religious holiday or carried out a religious practice expected of them by their religion.

6. LEAVE OR ABSENCE

- 6.1. Special leave with full pay may be granted to individual state-employed educators, in terms of the leave provisions in Circular 0061/2003 and amendments as set out in Government Gazette No 39684 of 12 February 2016, or to other school employees in terms of the RBHS Leave Regulations, for the observance of religious days, if those days are not designated as official school holidays.
- 6.2. Parents will be permitted to absent their sons from school for the observance of important religious days, provided that any absence will be motivated/requested/explained in writing to the Headmaster by the parent, and that the obligation will be on the learners concerned to make up any work missed as a result of such absence.



Reference number	POL 1.0
Version number	V201808
Version date	August 2018
Type of document	Policy

Policy on Religion

6.3. RBHS will endeavour to assist those scholars whose religion requires that they observe particular religious practices during school hours, and attempt to accommodate them by aligning school breaks and/or school hours with the periods of religious observance, where this is reasonably practicable, and depending on the number of scholars involved.

6.4. Given the wide religious diversity of the RBHS community, it will not be the norm for RBHS to apply for any further adaptations to the formal school day, or the published school calendar, in order to accommodate the specific needs of any one religious group.

7. CONCESSIONS

Where an individual scholar believes sincerely that the above expectations and approaches do not address fully their particular religious needs, it is recognised that, in terms of the Constitutional Court ruling in case CCT 51/06³ and the way it is being currently interpreted, RBHS will make exceptions in respect of sincerely held religious and cultural beliefs and practices. It will do so on the following basis, in line with the spirit of the judgment:

7.1. No individual member of staff or scholar while in school uniform may overtly display prominent physical signs or insignia of their religious beliefs, unless a concession has been granted to such person in terms of the concessions as stipulated in this policy. This restriction includes jewellery, clothing, headgear, hairstyles, or any activity which, at the discretion of the RBHS Diversity Committee, or with a mandated Board member and the Headmaster, is deemed to be a prominent physical sign or insignia of a particular religion, and is applicable irrespective of whether such insignia or sign is within a religious or cultural context or not.

7.2. 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 person concerned will be required to continue to observe the principle set out in this Section, as well as other codes or rules in place at RBHS, including the uniform code and code of conduct, without dispensation or deviation.

7.3. There shall be no blanket distinction between religion and culture when considering a request for a concession. However, RBHS will not be required to make concessions where there is a real possibility of disruption to the achievement and maintenance of a disciplined and purposeful school environment, and the maintenance of the quality of the learning process if an exemption is granted.

³ The so called "nose-stud case"



Reference number	POL 1.0
Version number	V201808
Version date	August 2018
Type of document	Policy

Policy on Religion

- 7.4. In considering applications for exemptions, RBHS will expect of the staff member or scholar, or parents if the scholar is too young to make a cogent case, to apply in writing for such concession and will address the aspects outlined below, which will be taken into account by RBHS.
- 7.5. Applying staff members or scholars and their parents may be called upon to attend a meeting with the RBHS Diversity Committee, or with a mandated Board member and the Headmaster, in order to discuss the exemption and the possible conditions linked to the exemption, so as to limit the exemption's impact on the code of conduct as far as possible.
- 7.6. The Board, or the RBHS Diversity Committee, of which the Headmaster is a member, as the case may be, shall apply the following conditions when considering an application for concession:
- 7.6.1. The cultural or religious practice on which the application is based;
 - 7.6.2. The importance of that practice to the staff member or scholar concerned;
 - 7.6.3. Whether the practice concerned is mandatory or voluntary;
 - 7.6.4. Whether the cultural or religious community concerned regards it as a practice that would normally warrant exemption from RBHS rules;
 - 7.6.5. The extent of the exemption required, considering how great the required departure from RBHS rules will be, and for how long;
 - 7.6.6. The effect of the granting of an exemption on the achievement of the "disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the maintenance of the quality of the learning process" (see 7.3); and
 - 7.6.7. In coming to a decision, the Board may consult experts on the religion or culture concerned on the nature of the relevant practice and will provide the member of staff or parents or scholar with written notification of its decision and any conditions relating to the exemption.



Reference number POL 1.0
Version number V201808
Version date August 2018
Type of document Policy

Policy on Religion

8. RESPONSIBILITIES

In fulfilment of this policy:

8.1. Board of Governors

8.1.1. The Board takes ultimate responsibility for the proper implementation of this policy.

8.1.2. The Board delegates to the Headmaster together with a mandated Board member the discretion to determine concessions in accordance with the terms provided in this policy.

8.2. Headmaster

The Headmaster may delegate certain duties to their staff, to support the implementation of this policy.

9. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa	Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 108/1996 https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution/constitution-republic-south-africa-1996-1
South African Schools Act	South African Schools Act 84/1996 (As Amended By BELA Act 15 Of 2011) https://www.education.gov.za/Resources/Legislation/Acts.aspx
Leave Regulations	
Diversity Committee	

10. ADOPTION

The Board hereby adopts this policy. For an behalf of the RBHS Board of Governors:

Name: _____

Role: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____