



Religious Policy for Edgemean High School

1. Preamble

This Policy will be underpinned by:

- The freedom of all individuals in the school to religious choice.
- The right of all individuals to practice their own religion and to be free of coercion to join any religion.
- Mutual respect for all religions.

This policy has been developed, and will be interpreted and applied in line with the provisions, spirit and meaning of:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
- South African School Act, Act 84 of 1996
- Western Cape Provincial School Education Act, Act 12 of 1997
- The Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (BELA) Act 32 of 2024
- and any prescribed policies, directive or guidelines.

2. Values

The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) upholds the constitutional rights of all citizens to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion, and freedom from unfair discrimination on any grounds whatsoever, including religion, in public education institutions.

Within this constitutional framework, and as a public school, we have a responsibility to promote the core values of a democratic society, through the curriculum, through extra-curricular activities, and in our approach in general. These core values include equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability, and social honour:

- Equity:** The education process in general, as well as this policy, must aim at the development of a national democratic culture with respect for the value of all of 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, religions cultivate moral values and ethical commitments that can be recognised as resources for learning and as vital contributions to nation-building.
- Social Honour:** While honouring the linguistic, cultural, religious or secular backgrounds of all learners, we cannot allow the overt or covert denigration of any religion or secular worldview.

The spirit of the policy is to embrace the religious diversity of South Africa, allowing everyone the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion.

3. Religion Education

Religion Education describes a set of curriculum outcomes which define what a pupil should know about religion. Religion Education therefore takes place in accordance with the national curriculum and forms part of the learning area Life Orientation.

The teaching of Religion Education is to be done by educators teaching Life Orientation. Representatives of religious organisations who are registered with the South African Council of Educators (SACE) may be engaged and, as with other learning areas, occasional guest facilitators from various religions may be utilised, provided that this is done on an equitable basis. Such guest facilitators need not be registered with SACE, since they and the class remain under the authority of the educator.

The teaching of Religion Education must be sensitive to religious interests by ensuring that individuals and groups are protected from ignorance, stereotypes, caricatures, and denigration.

4. Religious Instruction

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 adherence thereto. Religious instruction of this sort is primarily the responsibility of the home, the family, and the religious community. Religious instruction may not be part of the formal school curriculum.

Attendance at a programme of Religious Instruction shall be voluntary and suitable arrangements are to be made for learners who are not attending.

Religious instruction programmes should be conducted in a manner that does not include denigrating or caricaturing of any other religion, does not interrupt or detract from the core educational purposes of the school or disrupt the normal functioning of the school.

Persons offering Religious Instruction must do so under the authority of their respective religious body or accreditation by the respective faith community, and would not be required to be registered with the South African Council of Educators.

Voluntary gatherings and meetings of religious associations during break times are also permitted as long as their activities do not disrupt the normal functioning of the school.

The SGB will consider written representations to the Principal from members of various faiths from time to time relating to Religious Instruction at EHS and approval may be granted after due consideration.

In considering the representations relating to a Religious Instruction programme, the SGB will take into account this policy, the multi-faith nature of the school, the representation of the different religions in the school, the ethos of the school and the need to ensure the minimum interruption from the core educational purposes of the school or disruption to the normal functioning of the school.



5. Religious Observance

Religious Observances are those activities and behaviours which recognise and express the views, beliefs and commitments of a particular religion, and may include gatherings of adherents, prayer times, dress and diets. The SGB may make the school facilities available for Religious Observances, in line with this policy and its values and on the basis that such observance is based on the principles of free and voluntary association and that facilities are made available on an equitable basis.

Although such Religious Observances may take place on the school property, they are not part of the official educational function of the school. There are various types of Religious Observance implied in this instance:

- voluntary public occasions, which make use of school facilities, for a religious service on a day of worship or rest;
- voluntary occasions when the school community (educators and learners) gather for a religious observance;
- observances held in a voluntary gathering of learners and/or educators during a school break;
- an observance which may be ongoing, and entail other dimensions such as prayer times, dress and diets, which must be respected and accommodated in a manner agreed upon by the school and the relevant recognised faith authorities.

While attendance at all school assemblies is compulsory, regardless of individually held religious beliefs, participation in a religious aspect of an assembly (e.g. hymn singing or praying) of a faith not personally held, is optional. It is expected, however, that due respect and appropriate demeanour be maintained by all throughout such activities.

Where religious observance is part of any other school activity such as musical events (e.g. Christmas Carols) or school plays, etc, participation in such observance shall be voluntary and a learner may not be prejudiced due to such non participation – alternative equitable arrangements may then be put in place for such affected learners.

Where parents require that their learners are absent from school for the observance of religious days, this will be allowed on the understanding that any absence will be requested and motivated in writing by the parent to the Principal, and that the obligation will be on the learners concerned to make up any work missed as a result of such absence. Similarly, if a learner needs to be regularly absent for predetermined period for only part of the day, the parent shall submit such request in writing to the Principal.

The SGB will consider all written representations from members of various faiths and parents from time to time relating to Religious Observances. Facilities and approval may be granted after due consideration. Such written representation to the SGB is through the Principal, unless the issue relates to an act by the Principal, in which case it is directed to the Chairperson of the Committee. In the case of a request that the school make available a designated area for the observance of prayers, a parent committee comprised of relevant parents would be responsible for arrangements and any other related requirements and a register of signing out and in may be kept at Reception or other suitable location.

In considering representations, the SGB will take into account this policy, the multi-faith nature of the school, the representation of the different religions in the school, the ethos of the school and the need to ensure the minimum interruption from the core educational purposes of the school or disruption to the normal functioning of the school

6. Role of the SGB

One of the responsibilities of the School Governing Body (SGB) is to develop, approve and oversee the implementation of school policies. The SGB shall in the application and interpretation of this policy and matters connected thereto, including cases of apparent contradiction between this policy and any other policy of the school, and in its decision making, take into account the underlying values of the Constitution, including the best interest of the child; the right to freedom of religion, belief and conscience; to just and fair administrative action; the right as it relates to education; and the need to ensure the effective administration and smooth running of the school in providing quality education. The SGB also reserves the right to consult with relevant experts if it deems necessary.

In terms of the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act (BELA Act), the Head of Department (HOD) shall oversee the implementation and ratification of this Religious Policy once adopted by the SGB, ensuring that it remains consistent with the Constitution, the South African Schools Act, BELA Act, and upholds principles of equity, non-discrimination, and freedom of religion.

7. Conclusion

All role players and stakeholders must promote and enhance understanding of and respect for religious diversity at Edgemoor High School.

Revised and Adopted by the School Governing Body of Edgemoor High School on

Signed: _____

Chairperson: EHS SGB

Date: 3/3/2020

Signed: _____

PRINCIPAL

Date: 3/3/20