

Tom Newby School

Policy Document



Religion Policy

TOM NEWBY SCHOOL

RELIGION POLICY

Date Approved by SGB	Awaiting ratification
Date of 1 st Implementation	August 2012
Date of amendment	August 2013; November 2016; November 2017; March 2019; March 2020; November 2022
Effective date	January 2023
Date of Next Review	November 2023
Approved by	Approved by the Tom Newby School Governing Body on behalf of the parents at Tom Newby School in accordance with a resolution taken at the Annual General Meeting.
Custodians	Principal and SGB Chairperson
References and Legislation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 2. Constitution of South Africa, Act No. 108 of 1996 3. Gauteng Schools Education Act, No 6 of 1995 4. GDE Circular 13 of 2000 – Guidelines on how to manage school resources 5. Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy. Pretoria. 2001 6. Government Gazette No. 25459 Government Notice No. 1307,12 September 2003: National Policy on Religion and Education. 7. GDE Provincial Circular 67/2002 8. National Policy on Religion and Education (General Notice No. 1307 of 2003) 9. Circular 19 of 2004 (Leave dispensation for educators) 10. National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act 27 of 1996) 11. Employment of educators Act, 1998 (Act 76 of 1998) 12. Admission of learners to public schools (General Notice 4138 of 2001
Application and Scope	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Principal 2. Parents, including the School Governing Body 3. Educators, including the School Management Team 4. Learners

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Definitions

Learner	Any person registered to receive education at the school
District Director	Means the officer of the department responsible for the administration of education
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 organisation thereof which are established in order to promote and protect these beliefs
Head of Department	Means the head of an education department
Parent	‘parent’ means— (a) the biological or adoptive parent or legal guardian of a learner; (b) person legally entitled to custody of a learner; or (c) the person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of a person referred to in paragraphs (a) or (b) towards the learners education at school
Principal	Means an educator appointed or acting as the head of a school
School Governing Body	Means the relevant body responsible for Governance issues
Religious observance	Activities, behaviours and practices that recognise and express the views, beliefs and commitments of a particular religion
“the School”	Refers to (Name of school)
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	Free from religious expression, coercion and prejudice
Religion Education	Describes a set of curriculum outcomes which define what a learner should know about that religion
Religious instruction	Refers to a programme of instruction that 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 recognised 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 and learners to be at school. It entails the 7 hours contact time that is expected of educators and learners , including breaks, compulsory activities, assembly and extramural activities

Acronyms

SBST	School Based Support Team
TNS	Tom Newby School
HOD	Head of Department
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
SASA	South African Schools Act
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
LOLT	Language of Teaching and Learning
SGB	School Governing Body
sms	Short message service

1. Preamble

The South African Schools Act mandates the School Governing Body (SGB) to determine the religion policy of a school. The said religion policy must be aligned to policy published in terms of the National Education Policy Act, 1996 as well as the South African Constitution.

This religion policy articulates the school's commitment to ensuring that all learners have access to quality education without any fear of discrimination on any grounds what so ever.

2. Purpose of the Religion Policy

The primary purpose of the policy is to:

- a. ensure that no religious discrimination of any description is practised at the school and
- b. develop a democratic respect of our country's diverse cultural and religious traditions.

The policy covers the different aspects of Religion Education, Religious Instruction and Religious Observances. It will also ensure that all religions in a school are accorded due respect and pride of place in the school.

This policy will ensure that the school makes the right religion choices to ensure that everyone involved with the school feels comfortable that their rights are respected. The school's commitment to delivery of the National Curriculum will be prioritised in matters relating to religious observances.

Further, this policy recognises our religious and cultural diversity, and therefore promotes respect for and tolerance of all religions.

Where this policy is silent on issues relating to Religion, relevant national and regional policy will be applied.

3. Principles of the Religion Policy

- a. All learners/educators shall be accorded full respect, regardless of their religious beliefs.
- b. The Governing Body of the school shall determine the religion policy of the school. The policy must be consistent with the Constitution, the SASA, subject to the approval of the Head of Department.
- c. No form of religious discrimination may be practised in implementing (applying) the religion policy determined in accordance with the legal requirements.
- d. A learner shall have the right to Religion Education as provided for in the curriculum.
- e. A learner/educator at the school shall have the right to be excused from religious observances should s/he wish to so.
- f. No learner/educator at the school may be penalised in any way for abstaining from the religious observances of the school.
- g. In accordance with Departmental Policy, one school day, per annum, may be used for religious observances and the learner will be marked as 'present' on the school register.
- h. The school's approach to religion is academic and not devotional.
- i. Religion education will be conducted as stipulated by the Curriculum.

4. Observance of Religious Holidays

4.1 Observance by educators and administrative support staff

- a. Educators and administrative staff who wish to observe a religious holiday/festival must complete the standard leave form and indicate that the leave applied for is special leave for religious observance.
- b. Planning for absenteeism of educators and administrative support staff due to a religious holiday/festival must be completed well in advance.
- c. Religious observances absenteeism may not exceed the (3) working days per annum.

4.2 Observance by learners

- a. Learners are allowed to participate in religious holidays/festivals. Only one day, per year is allocated by the Department of Education and therefore, on this day, learners should be marked present provided a substantiating letter is submitted to the school and

approved by the principal. Other days requested for religious observance may be granted by the principal, but learners should be marked absent.

- b. Arrangements should be made by educators to make sure that the affected learners are able to catch-up with their academic work/schedule. **However, the South African Schools Act is very clear that the final responsibility for catching up on work rests with the parent and learner.**
- c. Parents of learners should notify the principal, in writing, well in advance (preferably a month) of the learners' intentions to take certain school days off for the purpose of observing religious holidays/festival. Records of these requests will be kept for reference purposes.
- d. Learners have a right to pray individually or in a group provided this does not disrupt teaching and learning activities or interfere with the regular schedule/program of the school day and provided it is practicable, feasible and conforms to the secular principles of the school.

5. Learner participation in religious activities/observances

- a. Learner participation in religious activities/observances 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. Learners who choose not to attend religious services/observances during contact time will be involved in other activities approved by the school¹.
- c. Parents must 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 during contact time.
- d. Learners have the right of freedom of expression but they must not violate the rights of other learners and educators to attend these observances. Learners may not interfere with or disrupt school activities.
- e. The Constitution and South African Schools Act require learners to attend school for the prescribed number of hours per week. To this end, the school is not authorised to approve regular absence or early departure for observances such as *Salatul-Jumu'ah*².

¹ Learners who are not able or unwilling to attend any function that runs contrary to their religion, during school hours and where all educators or school supplied caregivers are occupied at said function, must be provided for, in terms of Duty of Care, by the parents of said learner/s. Such provision must be approved by the Governing Body and may not hinder the delivery of the National Curriculum.

² <https://www.alislam.org/book/salat/friday-prayer/>

6. Staff approach to and participation in religious activities/observances

- a. Educator participation in these activities is voluntary.
- b. Educators have to be objective about religion while carrying out their duties as educators. They must treat all different religious and cultural traditions with fairness and respect.
- c. Educators should not engage in or lead religious activities of learners during contact time.
- d. Educators may neither reward nor punish learners because they agree or disagree with their religious views.

7. Assembly

- a. The opening of the school assembly may, on occasion, consist of readings from the various religious scriptures, songs of praise or a short prayer. However, as a rule, the assembly begins with the School Song and concludes with the National anthem, recitation of the Constitution Preamble and the AU anthem. Stories and messages that form part of the assembly are ethos based and the messages are secular in nature.
- b. It is expected that assemblies be used as forums for celebrating religious and cultural diversity, in keeping with the values of the Constitution.
- c. If religious materials are used at assembly, they should preferably be presented in the framework outlined for Religion Education, that is, as an educational experience rather than a religious ceremony.
- d. Learners who are not of the Christian faith are not required to participate in activities such as Prayer should this religious practice be included at a particular assembly.

8. 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.

9. 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. 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.
- d. The school must obtain written approval from the Head of Department of the Gauteng Department of Education well in advance. Granting of permission for school closure will only be considered if the total number of school days for the year is not reduced.

10. Religious attire/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/toupees and head scarves, yarmulkes, dreadlocks, nose rings, etc. Religious attire should conform to the school uniform regulations as they apply to neatness, colour coding, cleanliness and safety.
- b. Learners may wear religious attire or symbols, provided they apply to the school and provide substantive evidence to the principal regarding the religious significance of the attire and/or symbols

11. School activities during religious holidays/festivals:

- a. The annual school planning schedule/calendar should reflect the major religious holidays or celebrations that may need to be considered for planning if they are not included on the Education Department official calendar, i.e. Ramadan, Diwali, Lent, etc.
- b. 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:
 - sporting activities/competitions
 - fundraising and social events
 - cycle tests/examinations; and
 - educational excursions
- c. The school will ensure that religious holidays of all religions mentioned in 11(a) are considered when drafting the annual school calendar to ensure that, in scheduling

examinations and tests, pupils are not prejudiced by their attendance at religious observances.

12. Religion and admissions

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

13. 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.

14. Constitutional rights of Learners, Parents & Staff

- a. The rights of learners, parents and staff members to have their own religious views are honoured in this policy.
- b. Where practical, possible and affordable, dietary requirements such as Vegetarianism, Halaal or Kosher, will be accommodated by the school tuck shop and at school functions.

15. General

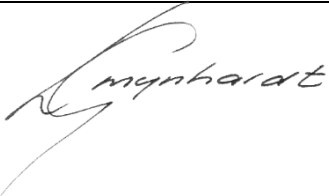

- a. Religious observances may be conducted at Tom Newby School provided they are conducted on an equitable basis, and attendance at these observances, by learners and members of staff, is based on non-discrimination and is voluntary.
- b. The school hall may be used by private groups as a religious observance facility, provided that this has been sanctioned (authorised) by the SGB in terms of Section 20(2) of the SASA and the relevant conditions are met.
- c. Teaching of Religion Education: This is undertaken in conjunction with the Life Orientation and Social Sciences Learning Areas of in line with the current curriculum for Grades R – 7.
- d. There shall be no prohibition or unreasonable restriction against any learner or group of learners from exercising or following a particular religion at school. No teacher shall be prohibited or restricted from joining or assisting a learner or group of learners in exercising, practicing or following such religion or be compelled to join or assist such a learner or learner group.
- e. Curriculum delivery is a prioritised activity at Tom Newby School. Applications to attend weekly or regular religious activities that impinge on contact time and curriculum delivery

will therefore only be considered upon written submission of such request from the parent or guardian. Conditions for granting of permission will be considered, by the Governing Body, in accordance with the SASA and any other relevant legislation.

16. Conclusion

The school will always endeavour to ensure that the infrastructure caters for the requirements necessary to implement the policy.

Signatures

Recommended by: (Principal)	G Mynhardt	Signature:	
Date:	15 November 2022		
Approved by: (SGB Chairperson)	A Naicker	Signature:	
Date:	15 November 2022		
Verification by GDE: (District Director/IDSO)		Signature:	
Date of Verification:			
Certified by :		Signature:	
Date:			