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RHENISH PRIMARY SCHOOL  
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## RHENISH PRIMARY SCHOOL POLICY ON RELIGION

### 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.

**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 the Scriptures, dress and diets. In terms of the South African Schools Act, 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

### PREAMBLE

In order for a Policy on Religion to be considered fitting and true for Rhenish Primary School, it is exceedingly important to understand the very early history of the school. This history of RPS sets it apart from most schools in the Republic of South Africa.

Bearing in mind that Rhenish Girls' High School and Rhenish Primary School, share the same beginning, it follows that they share similar religious principles. They sing the same school hymn and school Psalm (Psalm 121). All references to religion between the two institutions are identical. It is therefore clear that any suggestion of change concerning the Policy of Religion for RPS will also affect the High School.

### **A Brief History of Rhenish Primary School**

The Rhenish School was founded in 1860 by the Rhenish German Missionary Society, as the first girls' boarding school in the Cape Colony. The school opened on the 1 May 1860 in a building in Alexander Street belonging to the Rev. P.D. Lückhoff. The first principal was Miss Voight.

In 1862 the Rev. Terlingen donated to the school, a single story house on the Braak, which later became a double story building housing the P.J. Olivier Art Centre today.

It was due to Rev. Weber that Rhenish survived and became self-supporting during difficult times in the country. He served on the committee for nearly 40 years and his descendants have retained links with the school ever since.

It is very clear that, given the very brief historical outline above, that the very early foundations of RPS have been constructed on Christian principles. It is therefore of utmost significance that this, together with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, are to be used as a basis of the Policy of Religion for RPS.

The school, having passed 150 years of age in 2010, has been influenced and shaped over the years by its religious observances, and Christian references have been central to the development and maintenance of the ethos of RPS.

## **INTRODUCTION**

- The different religions in our country are recognized by the Constitution of South Africa (Act no. 108 of 1996) as well as Section 7 of the South African Schools Act, no. 84 of 1996.
- These laws protect each individual against any form of discrimination on grounds of religion.
- School Governing Bodies also have permission to determine the nature of religious celebrations, provided that such celebrations take place in a fair manner and that attendance is free and voluntary for the learners and staff.

The South African Constitution gives recognition to the role of faith and religion in our society. The preamble to the constitution ends with the words:

*“May God protect our people.”*

*“Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika. Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso.”*

*“God seën Suid Afrika. God bless South Africa.”*

*“Mudzimu fhatutshedza Afurika. Hosi kateskisa Afrika.”*

With this in mind RPS acknowledges the vital role that religion plays in our lives.

## **AIM**

- As we are in a democratic dispensation, religious tolerance is promoted and encouraged in our school without offending anybody.
- A further aim of religion is to determine the way or method of religious observation.

## **Mission of the school**

The staff, learners and parents should have the necessary regard for any religion other than their own. Educators and learners will be able to attend the particular religious observance voluntarily. The school will in no way compel educators or learners to participate in religious activities against which they have a conscientious scruple. Alternative arrangements will be made, if necessary, for the supervision of those learners who do not want to attend religious observances. Pupils must provide the school with a letter in which the parents confirm the conscientious scruple.

## **OBSERVABLE RELIGIONS**

The school should observe and exercise the following regarding religions and denominations:

1. The inclusion of all religions and denominations.
2. Christian principles should be applied without discrimination against other religions.
3. No religious principle should be forced on any learner, educator or parent.
4. All religions’ festivals should be respected and observers of religions should be given the opportunity to participate in such celebrations.
5. Any parent, educator and learner has the right to lodge a complaint at the School Governing Body if any of these parties feel their religious principles are being discriminated against or not respected.

6. The beginning of the school year and terms and the end of the school year should be marked in a religious assembly that is acceptable to all.
7. Non-teaching staff, the School Governing Body and parents are welcome to attend the religious assemblies in the hall.
8. Any recognized preacher or other volunteer may be invited to lead religious assemblies.
9. All other gatherings arranged by the school may be opened and closed with a prayer.

### **PROMOTION OF TOLERANCE**

The school tries to promote tolerance and understanding amongst learners from the different religious groups in the following ways:

- religious observations;
- no discrimination against learners or educators;
- example of educators;
- weekly assemblies with reading from Scriptures, message and singing of religious songs;

As far as possible the school will promote and enhance understanding of and respect for religious diversity.

### **RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES, FESTIVALS AND REFERENCES UNIQUE TO RPS**

#### **Founders' Day**

As this day celebrates the founders of RPS, who were missionaries, a traditional assembly is held where the School Hymn: "*O God of Bethel by whose hand...*" is sung. In addition to this a prayer is expressed, and Psalm 121 is read.

#### **Annual Prize Giving Ceremony**

The School Hymn is sung: "*O God of Bethel*"

A Bible reading takes place: "*The Lord our Protector*" (Psalm 121)

A prayer is expressed: "*O God, our Heavenly Father, we thank you once again for all Your generous gifts You have given us.*"

#### **Frequent singing of the School Song, containing the following lines:**

*"Ebenezer is our watchword"*

*"God guide our eager footsteps. Sing praise in this our song."*

#### **Ebenezer**

References to the word "*Ebenezer*" will frequently take place throughout the year. Ebenezer has its origins in the Bible, at 1 Samuel 7 verse 12. It means: "*Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.*"

Then word "*Ebenezer*" is our school's motto.

#### **Scripture Union:**

A once weekly Scripture Union is held by teachers for children interested children from Grades 1 to 7, although the sessions split between the Foundation Phase and the Intersen Phase.

#### **Start and End of Terms:**

At the start of each term at the opening assembly, the following hymn is sung: "*Lord Behold us with Thy blessing.*"

At the end of each term at the closing assembly, the following hymn is sung: *“Lord dismiss us with Thy blessing.”*

***This policy has been adopted:***

At Rhenish Primary School

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

Principal:

\_\_\_\_\_

Governing Body Chairman:

\_\_\_\_\_

