



| Policy Name: Religious Instruction and Devotions during school hours | |
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| Policy Code: | ED16 |
| Approved in: | May 2013 |
| Next Review in: | May 2016 |
| Cross References: | |
| This policy should be cross-referenced with the following: • Curriculum policy; Education Law (2010 revision); Cayman Islands Constitution Order (2009); | |

INTRODUCTION:

The Ministry of Education, Training & Employment recognizes that public schools provide an education to students from many different cultural backgrounds, faiths and denominations. It is therefore important to ensure that policy and procedures are established which, whilst recognising the Christian heritage of these islands, are not discriminatory in practice. Schools teach Religious Education (RE) mainly through their formal curriculum, which is education about Christianity and the other major world religions, what people believe and how that belief affects their lives. Devotions and Religious Instruction (RI) represents the teaching of religion, which involves the beliefs and practices of an established religious persuasion being shared by representatives of that persuasion.

Aims:

This policy aims to establish policy and procedures for the provision of Religious Instruction (RI) and Devotions in schools.

Policy Statement:

1. RE is required to be delivered to all students as part of the curriculum in all government schools.
2. Practice in schools will conform to the Cayman Islands Constitution Order (2009) section 10.1 and 2, that “No person shall be hindered by government in the enjoyment of his or her freedom of conscience (which) includes freedom ...of religion or religious denomination; freedom to change his or her religion, religious denomination or belief; and freedom, either alone or in community with others, both in public and in private, to manifest and propagate his or her religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice, observance and day of worship.”
3. The curriculum, teaching and Religious Instruction in government schools should not promote, nor discriminate against, any particular religious practice, denomination or sect.
4. Devotions and RI form part of the regular assembly and group gatherings in all government schools.
5. Parents must be informed in advance of the offering of any program or activity with Devotions or RI so that they may withdraw consent for their child/ren to participate in that part of the program or activity.



6. The personal religious beliefs of staff should not be imposed on students or other staff in the normal course of working duties.
7. Staff are not be required to lead Religious Instruction, but are expected to attend and supervise students during Devotions.

Exemptions

- Parents may exercise an option to withdraw their child's participation in Devotions, and RI, if they determine it to be contrary to their beliefs. Exempted students should not be educationally disadvantaged by such a decision and suitable supervision should be provided.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

The Ministry of Education will:

- Establish educational policy;
- Ensure that all Ministry staff schools and other relevant stakeholders are aware of this policy, related guidance documents and procedures.

The Education Standards and Assessment Unit will:

- Evaluate the effectiveness with which this policy is implemented;
- Comment on the impact of RI and Devotions in the course of inspections, where significant benefits or issues are identified.

The Department of Education Services (School Improvement Officers) will:

- Monitor the compliance of schools with this policy;
- Support the effective implementation of this policy by schools.

School leaders will:

- Implement the Ministry policy, or develop a school RI and Devotions code of practice, in consultation with their school community, particularly the Parents and Teachers Association, that conforms to the Ministry RI and Devotions policy;
- Distribute the Ministry policy and/or school RI and Devotions code of practice to staff, students, and parents and caregivers, particularly at the time of student enrolment;
- Ensure the Ministry policy and/or school RI and Devotions code of practice is effectively implemented throughout the school;
- Ensure all staff understand and can communicate the difference between Devotions/RI (the teaching of religion) and RE (teaching about religion)
- Keep parents regularly informed in advance of the school's plans for RI and Devotions within assemblies and other group gatherings;



School staff will

- Ensure their school's RI and Devotions code of practice (Ministry policy) is implemented;
- Keep the principal fully informed of their plans for Devotions and RI.

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

Arrangements for Devotions and Religious Instruction programmes

Principals should:

- Inform all parents at enrolment, and on request, of generic details of programs of Devotions and Religious Instruction provided at school and of their right to withdraw their child from a Devotions and/or Religious Instruction program by providing a written request. The leaflet 'Guidance to parents on Devotions and Religious Instruction in schools' is available to assist with this;
- Allocate time for RI Devotions that does not exceed 15 minutes per day, with the exception of one day per week having up to 30 minutes for extended RI and Devotions. The total amount of time provided for RI and Devotions should not exceed one hour 30 minutes per week;
- Manage approaches from local religious groups to ensure, wherever possible, that particular faiths or denominations are not over-represented in their school RI and Devotions programmes;
- Monitor school activities offered to students not attending Devotions/Religious Instruction so students who do not attend do not experience educational disadvantage.

Information sharing for Devotions and Religious Instruction programmes

Principals should:

- Ensure up to date information on each term's/half-term's Devotions and RI programs is available to all parents;
- Retain records of all parent notifications requesting exemption from RI and/or Devotions.

School Prayers

In keeping with the Cayman Islands Constitution Order (2009) affirmation to be "a God-fearing country based on traditional Christian values", prayers in schools will be Christian, but non-denominational, in nature. Students, whose parents have indicated an objection to Devotions and/or RI, including their child being present when prayers are said, should be supervised in another area of the school.



Commemorations, Observances and Multi-Faith/Denomination Services in Schools

Commemorations and Observances generally contain religious elements and parents/caregivers are to be notified of this in the course of any communications from school. Schools will provide alternative activities for students not participating.

Curriculum related programs with a religious base

Principals should:

- Exercise care when using externally derived curriculum-related materials that have been developed by a religious faith or denomination and ensure that these programs and/or materials do not implicitly or explicitly promote that faith or denomination.

Voluntary student activities of a religious nature in schools

Voluntary religious activities and prayer groups of any faith or denomination are not part of the general curriculum, but may operate under the auspices and supervision of the principal outside of scheduled instructional time.

Principals should manage applications from local religious groups to offer extra-curricular programmes, to ensure that, wherever possible, particular faiths or denominations are not over-represented.