



92 Second Avenue, Mount Lawley 6050 Tel: 9370 2170 Fax: 9370 5160 A/H: 0407 370 210 ABN: 33 639 820 734

Offsite Kindergarten: 65 Woodsome Street, Mount Lawley Telephones: Kindy 1: TBA K2: 9272 1236 K3: 9272 1248

Email: mountlawleyps@education.wa.edu.au Web: <http://www.mountlawleyps.wa.edu.au/> Phone App: *Mt Lawley Primary School*

RELIGION POLICY

REVISION:

1.0

DATE:

13 March 2015

DOCUMENT HISTORY

DATE	REV	APPROVED
13/03/15	1.0	Endorsed by Council: 12/03/15 Don Barba, Principal: 12/03/15

Revision Details

REV	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE
0.1	Draft for comment
1.0	Initial issue

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	3
2	Definitions	3
3	Policy	3
3.1	Background	4
3.2	Christian Religious Education (CRE)	4
3.3	Events & Activities	5
3.4	Guidelines for the Principal and Teachers.....	5
3.5	Exemptions.....	6
3.6	Concerns	6
4	References.....	7

1 Introduction

Mount Lawley Primary School supports a policy addressing how religious matters are, or are not, dealt with at MLPS.

This Policy was developed in consultation with the school community. It has been endorsed by the School Council and approved by the Principal. The Principal and staff shall be responsible for its implementation.

This Policy will take effect on 13 March 2015.

The Principal, with the assistance of the School Council, shall ensure that this Policy is reviewed as required, but no less frequently than every 3 years. Review of this Policy shall be conducted in consultation with the school community.

2 Definitions

In this Policy -

- “Act” is the *School Education Act 1999* as amended.
- “CRE” is Christian Religious Education commonly known as “Scripture”.
- “DoE” is the Western Australian Department of Education.
- “GRE” is General Religious Education and is about the major forms of religious thought and expression characteristic of Australian Society and other societies and may be provided in public schools as part of the general school curriculum. The focus of GRE is on the sociological based study of various religious traditions rather than on the encouragement of personal commitment by students to a particular set of religious beliefs.
- “MLPS” is the Mount Lawley Primary School.
- “Principal” means the principal of MLPS.
- “Regulations” is the *School Education Regulations 2000* as amended.
- “School Council” is the MLPS Council.
- “SRE” is Special Religious Education which is based on distinctive religious tenets or beliefs and may be provided in public schools by persons authorised to deliver SRE.

3 Policy

The DoE’s Religious Education Policy requires consideration by a school council about the implementation of SRE and a general policy concerning the use of prayers, songs and other materials based on religious, spiritual or moral values to be used in a school activity as part of GRE.

The School Council acknowledges and values the diversity of our MLPS community, including the cultural, religious and secular backgrounds of our students. MLPS aims to avoid circumstances where parents might seek to exempt their child from attendance at classes or events and activities because of religious content or values.

This document sets out the School Council’s policy in relation to events and activities based upon religion and the School Council advises the Principal accordingly.

3.1 Background

MLPS must comply with each and all of:

- the Act;
- the Regulations;
- the DoE's Religious Education Policy;
- the DoE's Equal Opportunity, Discrimination and Harassment Policy; and
- the DoE's Guidelines for Exemption from Particular Classes.

Under s68(1)(a) of the Act, the curriculum and teaching in government schools is not to promote any particular religious practice, denomination or sect.

Under s68(2)(b) of the Act, prayers, songs and other material based on religious, spiritual or moral values being used in a school activity are only permitted where they are part of "general religious education" which is defined in the Act as "education about the major forms of religious thought and expression characteristic of Australian society and other societies in the world". The DoE's Religious Education Policy highlights that the focus of general religious education is on the "sociological based study of various religious traditions rather than on the encouragement of personal commitment by students to a particular set of religious beliefs".

Under s71 of the Act, a parent of a child at a government school may notify the principal in writing that the child is not to receive any special religious education or attend that part of a school activity at which material referred to in section 68(2)(b) is used. A principal to whom such a notice is given must take all reasonable steps to see that the parent's wishes are complied with.

The DoE's Religious Education Policy is that:

"The curriculum and teaching in public schools is not to promote any particular religious practice, denomination or sect."

The DoE's Religious Education Policy background statement states that:

"Western Australian public schools provide a secular education to students and families from many different cultural backgrounds and faiths. It is therefore important to ensure that, as part of the general curriculum, schools respect the background and beliefs of all students by not promoting any particular set of beliefs in preference to another."

Under the DoE's Equal Opportunity, Discrimination and Harassment Policy, the Principal must also provide school leadership that promotes equity and diversity in their teaching and learning programs, and within the school community.

3.2 Christian Religious Education (CRE)

SRE is "based on distinctive religious tenets or beliefs and may be provided in public schools by persons authorised by the DoE to deliver SRE. MLPS has offered Christian Religious Education (CRE commonly known as "Scripture") through volunteers trained by YouthCARE to students in some or all of grades 1 to 3 at various times historically. YouthCARE publish information about the program under the heading on their website: "CRE - Facts".

More recently, a secular values-based program has been provided by MLPS as an alternative (chosen by parents) to CRE.

3.3 Events & Activities

Certain events are based upon religious or cultural celebrations, as well as various belief systems. These events include those events acknowledged as public holidays by the Australian Government (such as Easter and Christmas) as well as events that are not currently recognised as Australian public holidays.

The decision whether to acknowledge or celebrate these events is made by the relevant teacher or the Principal. Teachers may integrate activities associated with these events as part of GRE within the curriculum (e.g. history) or as optional activities. All school activities (including assemblies, Harmony Day, ANZAC Day, end of year celebrations and discos) will be organised such that they respect all parents' views about religious and cultural content and do not promote any particular religious practice, denomination or sect.

3.4 Guidelines for the Principal and Teachers

The following guidelines are for use by the Principal, teachers and CRE teachers in the provision of CRE:

- The decision whether or not to offer CRE for any particular grade during school hours or after school hours rests with the Principal.
- If CRE is offered to students during school hours, then parents of those students will be offered a choice between their child participating in the CRE program or an alternative secular values-based program provided by MLPS.
- CRE is limited to a maximum of 40 hours per year.
- A qualified teacher employed by the DoE must be present to supervise CRE classes conducted by CRE teachers.

The following guidelines are for use by the Principal and teachers in conducting events and activities including school assemblies:

- Activities are not to include any dogma, doctrine or specific religious content such as prayers.
- Time dedicated to school activities as part of GRE will be appropriately balanced so that there is no promotion of any particular set of beliefs in preference to another.
- The following general activities are suggested as acceptable ways of acknowledging or celebrating events:
 - Consumption or making of food that is relevant to the specific event;
 - Making of craft, provided that there are secular options for parents of students to choose from;
 - Singing or performing music, provided that it does not have specific religious content;
 - Listening to or playing music, provided that it does not have specific religious content; and
 - General activities to increase understanding of religious or culturally significant events provided that they don't promote a particular belief system in preference to another.

3.5 Exemptions

As set out in the DoE's Religious Education Policy, parents can notify MLPS in writing that their child should be exempted from any part of a school activity which involves prayers, songs and other material based on religious, spiritual or moral values as part of GRE. This is consistent with the DoE's Guidelines for Exemption from Particular Classes.

It is suggested that parents notify MLPS if they seek an exemption from any aspect of a class, event or activity that may involve religious content.

It is expected that, as a result of implementation of this policy, there are unlikely to be circumstances where parents might seek to exempt their child from attendance at classes or events and activities during school hours because of religious content or values, other than a CRE program during school hours where Parents can choose that their child participate in a secular values-based program as an alternative to the CRE program.

3.6 Concerns

Any concerns in relation to the implementation of this policy should initially be raised with the Principal and if the concerns are not addressed to your satisfaction then as per the MLPS Communication Policy.

4 References

Department of Education:

School Education Act 1999 (Sections 68-71)

<http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/legislation/school-education-act-1999.en>

School Education Regulations 2000 (Division 6 – Special religious education)

<http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/legislation/school-education-regulations-2000.en>

Religious Education Policy

<http://det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/policies/religious-education.en?cat-id=3457121>

Equal Opportunity, Discrimination and Harassment Policy

<http://det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/policies/equal-employment-opportunity-diversity.en?cat-id=3457096>

Guidelines for Exemption from Particular Classes

<http://det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/guidelines/exemption-from-particular-classes-guidelines.en?cat-id=3457121>

School:

CRE and Values Programs

<http://www.mountlawleyps.wa.edu.au/Specialist+Programs/CRE+and+Values+Programs>

Communication Policy

To be completed in 2015 and will be available at:

<http://www.mountlawleyps.wa.edu.au/About+Us/Policies>

Other:

YouthCARE information about Christian Religious Education

https://www.youthcare.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=33&Itemid=24