

Ministry of Education, Heritage & Arts

SCHOOLS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL HOLIDAYS

Version Control – Final Version 8 August 2019

1. Purpose

1.1 This document details the policy and procedures relating to school observation of Religious and Cultural Holidays.

2. Definitions

2.1 Approved Religious and Cultural Holidays are the days outlined in paragraph 3.1. These are days nominated by an Established Religion or authorised representatives of a Fijian Cultural Group.

2.2 Established Religion is an organisation for which a memorial of the names of the trustees is registered under the *Religious Bodies Registration Act 1881* and recorded in the office of the Registrar of Titles.

2.3 Fijian Cultural Group is a collection of people who interact and share a sense of unity on account of a common ethnic, ancestral, generational or regional identity.

2.4 Guardian includes a person who has been granted (whether alone or jointly with another person or other persons) Guardianship of the child under the law, or by the Student's Parents.

2.5 MEHA is the Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts.

2.6 Parent is the natural or adoptive mother or father of a child.

2.7 Religious and/or Cultural Holiday is a day, days or event traditionally observed by an Established Religion or Fijian Cultural Group.

2.8 School is a facility registered as a school with the MEHA.

2.9 School Post Holder means a person appointed as a Principal, Head Teacher, Head of Campus, a Vice Principal, Assistant Principal, Assistant Head Teacher or Head of Department.

2.10 Student means a minor who is under the age of 18 or a person who is over the age of majority who is enrolled to study at a School.

2.11 Teacher means Teachers, Assistant Teachers and Classroom Assistants employed by the MEHA.

3. Policy Statements

3.1 Approved Religious and Cultural Holidays

3.1.1 Schools may close to observe the following Religious and Cultural Holidays:

3.1.1.1 All Saints Day, 1 November

3.1.1.2 Ascension Day

3.1.1.3 Chinese New Year

3.1.1.4 Eid ul-Adha

3.1.1.5 Eid ul-Fitr

3.1.1.6 Feast of the Assumption of Mary, 15 August

3.1.1.7 Holi,

3.1.1.8 John Wesley Day (24 May), and

3.1.1.9 Rama Navami (Lord Rama's birthday).

3.1.2 Only Schools of the faith or Fijian Cultural Group may close to observe the aforementioned holidays. Students and Teachers of the faith or Fijian Cultural Group attending Schools which do not close may take the day off School, but must make up for the lessons they miss.

3.1.3 Schools/Students may only observe the Religious or Cultural Holiday on the actual date of the Religious or Cultural Holiday on a School weekday.

3.1.4 Where Schools close to observe one of the Religious or Cultural Holidays listed in paragraph 3.1.1, some education regarding the Religious or Cultural Holiday must be provided to all Students.

3.1.5 Schools, through the School Head, must make up the lost learning and teaching time during the same Term, by either:

3.1.5.1 holding classes outside normal School Hours, or

3.1.5.2 extending the School Term.

3.1.6 Teachers will not be entitled to any additional pay or benefits for alternative hours worked to make up for lost teaching and learning time.

3.1.7 Schools must consult with Parents and Guardians regarding the proposed arrangements for the School closure. Parents and Guardians must be given a minimum of two week's advance notice of the proposed arrangements.

3.1.8 No Student or Teacher shall be coerced to participate in an activity arranged in accordance with paragraph 3.1.1, or pay a fee to support or participate in a Religious or Cultural Holiday.

3.2 Other Religious and Cultural Holidays - Alternatives to Observation without School Closure

3.2.1 Schools may also acknowledge Religious or Cultural Holidays other than those outlined in paragraph 3.1.1, but may not close the School to do so. A list of Religious and Cultural Holidays falling into this category is included in Annex A. Ways to mark the occasion may include:

3.2.1.1 incorporating the Religious or Cultural Holiday into delivery of the curriculum, or

3.2.1.2 holding an optional Religious or Cultural Holiday celebration, ceremony or activity during lunch or after School.

3.2.2 No Student or Teacher shall be coerced to participate in an activity arranged in accordance with paragraph 3.2.1, or pay a fee to support or participate in such an activity.

3.2.3 Alternative lessons or supervision must be provided for Students who choose not to participate in the activity arranged in accordance with paragraph 3.2.1.

3.3 Compliance and Audit

3.3.1 Audits will be conducted to assess compliance with this policy.

3.3.2 Formal disciplinary action may be taken against any Teacher or School Post Holder who breaches this policy.

3.4 Delegation

3.4.1 All duties in the policy may be delegated, in writing, however responsibility may not be delegated.

4. Procedures

4.1 Audits

4.1.1 The Manager, Executive Support Services¹ identifies Schools/a sample of Schools observing Approved Religious and Cultural Holidays, and others likely to be marking Religious and Cultural holidays without closing the School, seeking evidence that the Schools met the conditions of this policy.

¹ These duties will be undertaken by the Executive Support Unit until the restructure.

- 4.1.2 The request is sent to the Manager, School Operations in each Divisional School Support Hub², who seeks input from Schools in their Division. Review requests are sent to School Heads by the second week of Term 3.
- 4.1.3 The Manager, Executive Support Services validates that the conditions of the approval and requirements of this policy were met. Where evidence of compliance is not provided, School Heads are given an opportunity to explain the reason or provide details of compliance which may not have been previously evident.
- 4.1.4 The Manager, Executive Support Services prepares a submission outlining the results of the review and any recommended remedial actions and has it approved by Head, Learning and Teaching³ and Internal Audit prior to submission to the Permanent Secretary. This occurs no later than the first week of Term 3.
- 4.1.5 Once approved by the Permanent Secretary, a copy of the submission is provided to Managers, School Operations in each Divisional School Support Hub and Internal Audit. Manager, Executive Support Services oversees any remedial action with the assistance of the Managers, School Operations in each Divisional School Support Hubs.


5. Key Search Terms

- 5.1 Day of Commemoration, Holiday, International Day, Religious day of observation, Religious Holiday, School closure, School holiday.

6. Review Arrangements

- 6.1 This policy will be reviewed one year after approval by the Permanent Secretary and subsequent endorsement by the Honourable Minister.

Approved for implementation



Alison Burchell

Permanent Secretary for Education, Heritage
and Arts

Date: 28 / 8 / 2019

² District School Support Unit functions will be undertaken by the District Offices until the District School Support Units are established. Divisional Offices will undertake the functions of the Divisional School Hubs, until Divisional School Hubs are established.

³ Until the Learning and Teaching Unit is established, Director Primary will review all requests from Primary Schools, and Director Secondary will review all requests from Secondary Students.

Religious and Cultural Holidays Which May be Observed Without School Closure

- Swami Dayanand Bodh Diwas (Realisation to search for God, by Swami Dayanand, founder of Arya Samaj)
- Arya Samaj Sthapna Diwas (Foundation of Arya Samaj)
- Shree Ram Janm Diwas (Birth of Shree Ram)
- Pt Vishnu Deo Janm Diwas (Birthday of Pt. Vishnu Deo, Arya Samaj Leader in Fiji)
- Shree Krishna Janm Diwas (Birth of Shree Krishna)
- Dayanand Nirwaan Diwas/Diwali (Passing of Swami Dayanand)
- Ved Saptah (Study of Vedas)
- Sevak Ratnam Sadhu Kuppuswamy Day (Celebration of the life and work of the saint and founder of the Then India Sanmarga Iysa (TISI) Sangam)