

ADMISSION POLICY

POLICY OF BETHLEHEM VOORTREKKER HIGH SCHOOL REGARDING THE ADMISSION OF LEARNERS TO THE SCHOOL OR GRADES AT THE SCHOOL

Whereas Bethlehem Voortrekker High School (hereinafter referred to as “the School”) is a public school, having juristic personality by virtue of the provisions of Sections 15 of the South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996 (as amended) (hereinafter referred to as “SASA”), the governance of which is entrusted to its School Governing Body (hereinafter referred to as “the SGB”), as referred to in Section 16 of the SASA;

And whereas the SGB is empowered in terms of Section 5 of SASA to determine the School’s policy regarding the admission of learners to the School and grades at the School, subject to the provisions of SASA and any applicable Provincial Law;

And whereas the SGB is mindful of the following enactments (hereinafter referred to as “the enactments”) relating to the question of the admission of learners to the School or different grades at the School, namely:

- (i) The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa contained in Act No. 108 of 1996 (hereinafter referred to as “the Constitution”);
- (ii) Section 3(3)(4)(I) and 5 of the National Education Policy Act, No. 27 of 1996 (“NEPA”);
- (iii) The Admission Policy for Ordinary Public Schools, published by the Minister of Education in Government Gazette No. 19377 dated 19 October 1998 (Notice No. 2432/98) (hereinafter referred to as the “Ministerial Policy”); and
- (iv) the Education Laws Amendment Act, No. 50 of 2002 and whereas the School and its SGB defer to the relevant provisions of the enactments to the extent that they may be valid and binding upon them and take precedence over the power of the SGB to determine the admission policy of the School, whilst being determined to ensure the full implementation of the School’s admission policy within the parameters of the enactments and any other applicable enactments from time to time, now therefore the SGB, on behalf of the School, declares the School’s Policy for Admission of Learners to the School or different grades at the School, to be as follows:

1. APPLICATIONS FOR ADMISSION TO THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 It is acknowledged that
 - (a) the Head of Department (Education) (hereinafter referred to as “the HOD”) and/or officials of the Free State Department of Education delegated by the HOD (hereinafter referred to as “the HOD delegate(s)”) is/are responsible for the administration of the admission of learners to the School; and
 - (b) the HOD/the HOD delegate(s) must determine a process of registration for admission to public schools in order to enable the admission of learners to take place in a timely and efficient manner.
- 1.2 It is emphasised that the HOD/the HOD delegate(s)/the School Principal must (and will be required to) take this policy into account transparently, fairly and in accordance with law at all times whilst acting in accordance with paragraph 1.1 above, or whilst engaged in the process of deciding upon applications for admissions. The School and its SGB will also require the HOD/the HOD delegate(s)/the School Principal to allow the SGB full access to and copies of any registers or files kept as part of the admission process.
- 1.3 The School and the SGB require the HOD/the HOD delegate(s)/the School Principal to add to the prescribed application form, and ensure the completion by the Applicant of the Schedule of Information required by the governing body attached hereto.
- 1.4 The School and the SGB require the HOD/the HOD delegate(s)/the School Principal to ensure that Applicants are informed of and in writing acknowledge having read and understood:
 - (a) the SGB Constitution;
 - (b) the School’s Language Policy;
 - (c) the Code of Conduct for Learners; and
 - (d) this Admission Policy.
- 1.5 The School and the SGB subscribe to the view that according to law, and in the absence of a Court Order directing otherwise, the legal guardian(s) of a minor learner has/have the exclusive right to decide upon the school where their child/children/ward is to be enrolled. Consequently, the School and SGB do not recognise an application as being valid, unless made by the guardian(s) or person(s) by order of Court entrusted with the custody of the minor learner, or a person or persons thereto authorised by them in writing. The School and the SGB also regard adherence to this approach as being essential in that it ensures that valid permission may be given for the treatment of the learner *in loco parentis*, for the learner to embark on excursions, and so forth. Consequently, the HOD/the HOD delegate(s)/the School Principal are required to ensure that this approach is strictly adhered to.
- 1.6 The SGB undertakes to support the HOD/the HOD delegate(s)/the School Principal in encouraging the persons referred to in paragraph 1.5 to apply for the admission of their child/children before the end of the year preceding the next school year.
- 1.7 Subject to this Policy, the SGB requires the HOD/the HOD delegate(s)/the School Principal to co-ordinate the admission of learners to public schools, including the School, in consultation with it and undertakes to give constructive support in ensuring that all eligible learners are suitably accommodated.
- 1.8 Where a learner or prospective learner is three years or more above the normal, legally prescribed grade age for the grade in which he/she is, or for the grade to which admission is sought on his/her behalf, the School Principal must consult with the SGB regarding whether the learner must be admitted to an appropriate grade in this School, or be admitted to a bridging programme/fast tracking facility provided by the District Director of the Provincial Department of Education before deciding what action to take in the circumstances.
- 1.9 The School and the SGB require strict observance by the HOD/the HOD delegate(s)/the School Principal of the following provision of the Constitution as a prerequisite to any decision to be taken regarding the admission of a learner to the School –
“28 (2) – A child’s best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child.”

2. ORDER OF PREFERENCE REGARDING APPLICATIONS FOR ADMISSION

- 2.1 Unless and until the HOD, after consultation with the SGB, decides otherwise, the natural feeder area of the School is Bethlehem.
- 2.2 The School is currently an Afrikaans-medium institution equipped with human resources to cater primarily for those learners whose mother tongue or chosen language of tuition is the medium of tuition at the School.. Teaching will be done in parallel medium or double medium (English) on condition that the necessary facilities are available.
- 2.3 Whilst the School and SGB know that they may not unfairly discriminate against a learner on whose behalf an application is made for admission, and have no intention thus to discriminate, and whilst they are desirous of playing their part in the education of learners in partnership with the State, they appreciate that the School cannot accommodate all learners and that some process of (fair) discrimination regarding admission of learners is inevitable. Therefore, and in view of the foregoing, it is the School’s policy that the following preference be afforded to applications –
 - (a) **First**, those in respect of learners *bona fide* (genuinely) residing with their parents (as defined in SASA) within the natural feeder area of the School, and whose mother tongue is the medium of tuition of the School.
 - (b) **Second**, those in respect of learners *bona fide* (genuinely) residing with their parents (as defined in SASA) within the natural feeder area of the School, and whose chosen medium of tuition (the choice being exercised by the parent(s) in the application of admission) is the medium of tuition of the School.
 - (c) **Third**, those in respect of learners whose parent or parents is/are genuinely employed at an address within the natural feeder area of the School, and whose mother tongue is the medium of tuition of the School.
 - (d) **Fourth**, those in respect of learners whose parent or parents is/are genuinely employed at an address within the natural feeder area of the School, and whose chosen medium of tuition (the choice being exercised by the parent(s) in the application for admission) is the medium of tuition of the School
 - (e) **Fifth**, learners residing outside the natural feeder area of the School, whose mother tongue is the medium of tuition of the School, and who wish to study a subject or subjects offered by the School and no other school closer to the learner’s place of residence.

- (f) **Sixth**, learners residing outside the natural feeder area of the School, whose chosen medium of tuition (the choice being exercised by the parent(s) in the application) is the medium of tuition of the School, and who wish to study a subject or subjects offered by the School and no other school closer to the learner's place of residence.
- (g) **Seventh**, learners residing outside the natural feeder area of the School, and whose mother tongue or chosen medium of tuition is the medium of tuition of the School, on the basis of first come, first served.
- Notwithstanding the foregoing, the SGB reserves the right to afford overriding preference to siblings of learners already enrolled at the School.

3. SCHOOL FEES

- 3.1 The Applicant is to note that the failure or refusal or inability of parents (as defined in Section 1 of SASA) to pay school fees cannot be an obstacle to the admission of the learner to the School.
- 3.2 In terms of Sections 38-41 of SASA, an Annual General Meeting ("AGM") of parents of learners enrolled at the School must be held after thirty (30) days' written notice to parents. At the AGM the majority of parents present decide whether or not to accept the budget prepared by the SGB for the next financial year. At the same meeting the majority of parents present and voting may decide that the payment of school fees is to be compulsory, what the amount of school fees per learner per year will be, and what criteria will be used to grant total or partial exemption to parents who are unable to pay the compulsory fees or the full compulsory fees. Parents who are unable to pay any of the fees or the full amount of the fees are entitled to apply to the SGB on the prescribed forms for total or partial exemption from the payment of school fees. Such applications must be dealt with in confidence by the SGB, which must act fairly and apply the abovementioned criteria and the provisions of the applicable Ministerial Regulations, a copy of which will be furnished to parent(s) on request. Parents applying for relief may request an educator at the School or any other person to assist him/her/them with the application. A parent/parents who feel aggrieved at the decision of the SGB may appeal to the HOD, following the procedure set out in the said Regulations.
- 3.3 It is important, however, for Applicant(s) for exemption to note that the combined annual income of parents is taken into account in the decision as to whether or not the parent(s) qualify for exemption. "Combined annual gross income of parents" is defined in Regulation 1 of the aforesaid Regulations as –"the gross income of all the parents of a learner as defined in the Act, calculated together ...".
- 3.4 "Parent" is defined in SASA to mean-
- (a) the parent or guardian of the learner;
 - (b) the parent legally entitled to the custody of the learner; or
 - (c) a person who undertakes to fulfil the obligations of the persons referred to in (a) and (b) towards the learner's education at the school.
- So, for example, if the learner has a father and mother, but lives with his/her aunt, who is a person such as the one referred to in (c) above, the combined gross income (before tax or deductions) of all three, the mother, father and aunt, will be taken into account in deciding whether there may be a total or partial exemption from the payment of school fees.
- 3.5 It is for this reason that the details of all persons who fall within the definition of "parent" must be furnished to the School in the application for admission.
- 3.6 The Applicant's attention is drawn to the following provision of SASA – (Section 41) – "The governing body of a public school may by process of law enforce the payment of school fees by parents who are liable to pay ..."
- 3.7 Parents of learners are encouraged to support the high standard of education and the sound school facilities and environment by paying school fees and, where they are exempted totally or partially from the payment of compulsory school fees, to offer their services to the SGB for the benefit of the School.

4. SCHOOL PROPERTY

The Applicant's attention is drawn to the following:

- (1) Every learner of a public school shall take good care of the property of Bethlehem Voortrekker High School which is placed at his/her disposal, and shall return it to the school on or before a date specified by any educator employed at the school.
- (2) The parents of a learner at a public school shall be liable for any damage to or loss of of Bethlehem Voortrekker High School property in respect of which the learner concerned is liable to of Bethlehem Voortrekker High School
- (3) It is the duty of every parent to assist the State and the governing body of a school to promote a culture of respect for school property.

5. RISK OF DAMAGE OR LOSS

The Applicant is notified that the School accepts no liability for the damage to, or destruction or loss of any property brought on the School premises by the learner or his/her parent(s). It matters not who causes such damage, destruction or loss, how it is caused, whether it is caused by someone's act or failure to act, or whether it is caused by someone's intention or negligence. The School accepts no liability. Learners are encouraged to safeguard property brought onto the School premises, and Applicants and parents of learners are encouraged to take out their own insurance against such damage, destruction or loss.

6. THE SCHOOL'S CODE OF CONDUCT FOR LEARNERS (INCLUDING DRESS CODE)

The Applicant is to note that whilst his/her refusal to subscribe to the School's Code of Conduct for Learners (including dress code) cannot be an obstacle to the admission of the learner to the School, the Code is nevertheless binding on the learner. Section 8(4) of SASA provides as follows: "Nothing contained in this Act exempts a learner from the obligation to comply with the code of conduct of the school attended by such learner."

The Applicant is encouraged to support the School in familiarising him/herself with the School's Code of Conduct for Learners and seeing to the observance thereof by the learner

7. REQUIREMENTS

Save where the provisions thereof will not serve the best interest of a learner or other learners, the SGB and the School refer to the Ministerial Policy.

8. ADMISSION OF NON-CITIZENS

As per regulation

9. THE SGB AND THE LEARNERS OF THE SCHOOL

- 9.1 All learners will be required to observe their duties and are entitled to exercise their rights and require the observance of their rights as set out in the Code of Rights and Duties of Stakeholders of the School.
- 9.2 The SGB considers itself to be in duty bound to protect the educators, learners, parents and non-educators of the School from physical or mental violence to the full extent of its power to do so and further, to foster the physical, mental and moral welfare of learners. To this end, the SGB:
- (a) reserves the right to scrutinise the disciplinary and behavioural record of any prospective learner of the School, and to take all steps within its power to prevent the admission of a learner whose conduct or behaviour may endanger the very interest the SGB considers itself to be in duty bound to protect;
 - (b) may enquire from and take issue with the HOD concerning the wisdom of admitting a learner to any grade in the School when the learner will be severely prejudiced by reason of the inability of the learner to communicate or be communicated with at the level required for proper tuition to take place in that grade;
 - (c) may take whatever steps may be reasonably practicable, given the resources and circumstances of the School, to assimilate a disabled prospective learner into the School; and

- (d) requires a member of staff or a learner or any learner's parent(s) to report to it any matter relating to the abuse of the rights or invasion of the interests which it seeks to protect.

10. The Parents and the School/SBL

- 10.1 The parent(s)/guardian(s) of learners are requested to complete the prescribed consent form, to enable the School staff to act in the best interest of the learner in cases of emergency or to relieve the learner's pain or discomfort until the "parent(s)" can intervene. (in loco parentis)
- 10.2 Parents of learners at the School have, apart from their duties, several rights. In this regard they are referred to the Code of Rights and Duties of Stakeholders of the School. *Inter alia*, they have the right to be consulted regarding the formulation of the School's language and religious policies and code of conduct, or any the supplementation or amendment of existing policies or the existing Code of Conduct for consideration by the SGB.
- 10.3 Parents are encouraged to become involved in all activities of the School, to offer to serve in the governance structures and support groups serving the interests of the School community, and to support the education process by interacting constructively with educators and ensuring that set work and homework is done by the learner conscientiously and punctually. Parents are also required to ensure that their children are properly equipped to participate fully in the tuition process and that they attend school punctually and regularly.

11. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The Governing Body reserves the right to adapt or change the school rules, as well as the admission requirements as circumstances demand/require

- 11.1 The ethos, mission and vision of Bethlehem Voortrekker High School must be maintained and enhanced at all times.
- 11.2 Bethlehem Voortrekker High School is a Christian institution. Learners of other beliefs will be admitted on the condition that they accept that Bethlehem Voortrekker High School is a Christian institution.
- 11.3.1 The medium of tuition of the majority of learners of Bethlehem Voortrekker High School is Afrikaans
- 11.3.2 There exists only one (1) class of 25 learners per grade where the medium of tuition is English.
- 11.4 The academic and disciplinary record of a learner will be very important.
- 11.5 Learners must be involved in extra mural activities.
- 11.6 Learners will only be taught in Afrikaans and/or English. Teaching will be done in parallel medium or double medium (English) on condition that the necessary facilities are available.
- 11.7 Admission of Non Citizens will only be allowed in accordance with the prescribed regulation.
- 11.8 Admission to Bethlehem Voortrekker High School does not guarantee admission to the hostel.
- 11.9 Admission of learners will be subject to the prescribed number of learners the school may admit.
- 11.10 The age of learners must correspond with the average age of the class.
- 11.1 Applications opens after the information evening in May and the closing date will be the last day of the 2nd term. Exceptions will be considered on merit.

12. This Policy may be amended, supplemented, modified or altered from time to time by the SGB.