

Title: Policy on Learner Pregnancies		Version/Revision	1 of 2018
Approved: TJ Dowling (Chair)	Status: Final Draft	Date Approved	3/3/2018
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# HOLY CROSS HIGH SCHOOL

## POLICY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF LEARNER PREGNANCIES

***This policy is informed by:***

- POLICY OF THE WCED REGARDING LEARNER PREGNANCIES
- FINDINGS/PROPOSALS OF JUDGE J RAMPAI IN HIS JUDGEMENT IN THE CASE BETWEEN WELKOM HIGH SCHOOL AND THE HEAD OF EDUCATION IN THE FREE STATE
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: GOVERNING BODY FOUNDATION FOR A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THIS POLICY

### 1. PREAMBLE

Ideally, according to Judge Rampai, “schoolgirls should not become pregnant” and schoolboys should not be party to causing pregnancies among their peers. In this regard, society at large and the school in general need to be mindful of the extent to which extra-marital sexual relationships and particularly consequential teenage pregnancies can:

- 1.1 Negatively influence the moral, ethical and disciplinary values of the school and its learners;
- 1.2 Contribute to the spread of disease;
- 1.3 Interrupt the education and damage the prospects of the relevant individuals.

As part of the school’s general educational programme, therefore, there will be a module/modules in which learners are provided with age-appropriate and culturally relevant information to help them develop the requisite values systems,

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knowledge, attitudes and skills to avoid pregnancy and understand that it is practically and morally best that learners should abstain from sexual activity.

However, should a learner fall pregnant, despite the efforts of the school, the measures which follow will apply.

## **2. RESPONSE BY THE SCHOOL**

- 2.1 Given the above understanding, the school will attempt to ensure that:
  - 2.1.1 Those involved are not accorded hero, heroine or martyr status by the school or their peers;
  - 2.1.2 The enormity of their actions is not downplayed as a result of the natural sympathy or empathy that may emanate from their predicament;
  - 2.1.3 They are aware of the need to accept responsibility for their actions, as well as for their own futures and the future of the unborn child.
- 2.2 Despite the above and despite also any moral or ethics-based indignation on the part of the school, the school's response shall:
  - 2.2.1 Have due regard for the rights of the pregnant learner before, during and after pregnancy; the interests of the pregnant learner's unborn child: the rights of pregnant learner's fellow learners at the school, and any other relevant consideration.
  - 2.2.2 Be in keeping with the constitutional imperative that the "best interests of the child are of paramount importance in every matter concerning that particular child" and not allow the lives and learning of the learners concerned to be disrupted.
  - 2.2.3 Without condoning or encouraging schoolgirl pregnancies, attempt to ensure that those who become pregnant should not be uncaringly treated as outcasts.
  - 2.2.4 Wherever viable and practicable, ensure that the learners involved are assisted to continue learning and that plans are worked out to mitigate the adverse impact of decisions.
- 2.3 In order to give effect to the foregoing, every effort shall be made by the school to gather and evaluate relevant information such as the girl's social and cultural background, medical condition, family support system, personal scholastic capabilities and determination to keep on attending school (this without endangering the pupil's life, that of her child or anyone else in the school and community.)

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2.4 In the light thereof, the school management team and governing body will do their best to ensure that the rights and development of female learners are not curtailed and that special measures are put in place in support of girls in the school who fall pregnant.

### 3. ACTION TO BE TAKEN WHEN IT BECOMES EVIDENT THAT A LEARNER IS PREGNANT

- 3.1 In the first instance, the matter will be treated with **sensitivity and confidentiality**<sup>1</sup>.
- 3.2 The learner will be regarded as a learner with special needs, and, where practicable, will be provided with access to counselling by professionals, or at least with advice in that regard.
- 3.3 The learner/parents/guardians will be requested to obtain a medical certificate giving the estimated date of confinement, the date from which it would be medically advisable for the learner to be absent from school before the confinement, and the date from which it is likely to be medically acceptable for her to return to school.
- 3.4 The principal will convene a meeting with the learner and her parents/guardians<sup>2</sup> in order to:
- 3.4.1 Gain an understanding of how she and her parents/guardians intend dealing with the matter.
- 3.4.2 Consider and discuss the various alternatives, which could include the following:
- 3.4.2.1 Remaining at school as long as it is medically advisable and then obtaining learning material and support from the school
- 3.4.2.2 Withdrawing from the school for the duration of the pregnancy and taking own responsibility for continued education
- 3.4.2.3 A Grade 12 candidate must be fully informed about examination options and procedures, although she herself is responsible for registering as a part time candidate for subsequent examinations.
- 3.4.2.4 The period during which she will be absent from school, based on the above information; this period must take account of the girl's needs and rights, and may not be extended beyond the minimum ideal period as a punitive measure.
- 3.5 In order to safeguard the best interests of all concerned, the school will enter into a written agreement with the parents/guardians and the learner in which it is stated clearly that:
- 3.5.1 The period of time during the pregnancy that the learner attends school will be at her own risk.
- 3.5.2 The school is indemnified from accountability for any pregnancy-related injuries or incidents.
- 3.5.3 No alternative or additional logistical arrangements can be demanded of the school by the girl or her family.

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- 3.5.4 No exceptions can be made regarding adherence to the school's code of conduct.
- 3.5.5 When the learner returns to school after the birth, she will not be allowed to bring the baby with her.
- 3.6 The school and the parents/guardians will also take relevant decisions about matters such as, but not exclusively, the following:
  - 3.6.1 Whether the matter is to be handled confidentially or not.
  - 3.6.2 What are regarded as appropriate behaviour and actions on the part of the learner.
  - 3.6.3 The nature and extent of her participation in the school's extra-curricular activities.
- 3.7 There will undoubtedly be a period of time during which the learner is absent from school. During such time:
  - 3.7.1 The learner's education will continue with as little disruption as possible.
  - 3.7.2 Alternative suitable arrangements will be made to cover the curriculum. For example, lesson notes and assignments will be made available to her and she must take responsibility for completing and returning the assignments to the school for continuous assessment.
- 3.8 The process of gathering valid information about the learner's performance and the formal recording of her progress throughout the year will be continued as far as practically possible, whether she is at school or at home.

#### **4 PREGNANCY OF A FULL-TIME GRADE 12 CANDIDATE**

When a full-time Grade 12 candidate becomes pregnant, the principal will deal with the case as follows:

- 4.1 In cases where special arrangements are required, the principal will report the pregnancy to the relevant official in the Examinations Section of the provincial education department, submitting a medical certificate as proof.
- 4.2 If a learner will be 32 weeks (or more) pregnant on 1 October of the Grade 12 year, as indicated in a medical certificate, she will be granted the following options:
  - 4.2.1 To write the October/November Senior Certificate Examinations in a separate examination room at the school or in a separate venue in the vicinity.
  - 4.2.2 To write the October/November Senior Certificate Examinations at another centre as a part time candidate, should she decide to terminate full-time school attendance.
- 4.3 If the learner chooses to write and is allowed to enter for the supplementary examinations of the following March, she must submit a medical certificate confirming that the term of her pregnancy was so advanced that it was impossible for her to write the October/ November Senior Certificate Examination.

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- 4.4 If the pregnant learner in Grade 12 is less than 32 weeks pregnant on 1 October and chooses to sit for the examinations, the following options will be available:
- 4.4.1 To write the October/November Senior Certificate Examinations at her own school
- 4.4.2 To write at a special examination centre.
- 4.4.3 To write at a special examination centre as a part time candidate should she decide to terminate full-time school attendance.
- 4.5 Should the choice be that the examination will not be written at the learner's own school, the school will arrange with the Examinations Section of the provincial education department for the girl to write at a special examinations centre.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> When it comes to light that a learner is pregnant, the norm will be that parents will be informed thereof and brought into the discussions concerning the way forward. Should the pregnant learner require/request that the matter be kept confidential even from her parents, **the school may maintain such confidentiality if its investigations bring to light clear and compelling reasons which indicate that it would be in the best interests of the learner that such confidentiality should be maintained.** The foregoing notwithstanding, confidentiality may **not** be maintained if it is likely to endanger the life, safety or well-being of the learner, the unborn child or any other person. Should the school decide to break confidentiality after it has been requested, the learner will be informed in advance of the decision to do so.
- <sup>2</sup> Should the investigation envisaged in this policy bring to light **clear and compelling evidence that it would be in the best interests of the learner that his/her parents are not informed of the pregnancy,** the principal will assume the duties falling to the parents in terms of this policy, or delegate such duties to a member of staff, or allow an official of the provincial education department to assume these duties.