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## FAITH BASED POLICY TO ACCOMPANY BILL 24

### I. FAITH PHILOSOPHY

ਮਾਨਸ ਕੀ ਜਾਤ ਸਬੈ ਏਕੈ ਪਹਿਚਾਨਬੋ ॥  
Recognize the whole human race as one.

ਸਭਨਾ ਜੀਆ ਕਾ ਇਕੁ ਦਾਤਾ ਸੋ ਮੈ ਵਿਸਰਿ ਨ ਜਾਈ ॥  
There is only the One, the Giver of all souls. May I never forget the Divine!

ਅਵਲਿ ਅਲਹ ਨੂਰੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਭ ਬੰਦੇ ॥  
The Divine created the Light; then, with Creative Power, all mortal beings were created.

ਏਕ ਨੂਰ ਤੇ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਕਉਨ ਭਲੇ ਕੋ ਮੰਦੇ ॥ 1 ॥  
From the One Light, the entire universe was created, so who is good, and who is bad? ||1||

As Sikhs we believe in equality and oneness and at Gobind Sarvar School we inspire our students and staff to see the Divine within everyone and to be respectful of all despite their race, nationality, religion, sexuality or caste.

### II.

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa! Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh!  
The pure ones belong to the Divine, and to the Divine goes the victory.

### WHEREAS:

This Gobind Sarvar School's Policy ("Faith-based Policy") shall apply to all aspects of the School's operations in the School's provision of faith-based education, programming and services.

Our mission at Gobind Sarvar is to inspire our students to become authentic life-long learners by providing a safe, nurturing environment focused on inquisitive thinking, self-exploration, and holistic growth. We are a Sikh faith-based school. Sikhs believe in EK ONKAR which means One Supreme Creator and we all belong to him. As Sikhs we believe in equality and oneness and at Gobind Sarvar

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#### Legal References:

- a) *Alberta School Act*, RSA 2000, c S-3: preamble, sections 2, 3, 16, 28
- b) *Alberta Bill of Rights*, RSA 2000, c A-14: preamble, sections 1 and 2
- c) *Alberta Human Rights Act*, RSA 2000, c A-25.5: sections 7, 8 and 11
- d) 2017 Bill 24, Third Session, 29th Legislature, 66 Elizabeth II ("Bill 24")
- e) *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990), article 5
- f) *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, article 18(4) (which protects the rights of parents to guide their children's religious upbringing)



School we inspire our students and staff to see the Divine within everyone and to be respectful of all despite their race, nationality, religion, sexuality or caste.

### *Alberta's School Act*

- the best educational interests of the student are the paramount considerations in the exercise of any authority under the *School Act*;
- students and staff are entitled to welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that respect diversity and nurture a sense of belonging and a positive sense of self;
- the Board of Directors of the GOBIND SARVAR SCHOOL ("Board") establishes this Faith Policy in relation to all aspects of the School's operations in its provision of faith-based education, including in relation to the Board's obligation to provide a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that includes the establishment of a code of conduct for students that addresses bullying behavior.

### *Student Code of Conduct*

Gobind Sarvar School is committed to providing to students and staff a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging and positive sense of self.

### Acceptable Behavior

Students will:

- Be diligent in pursuing the student's studies;
- Attend school regularly and punctually;
- Co-operate fully with everyone authorized by the board to provide education programs and other services;
- Comply with the rules of the school;
- Account to the student's teachers for the student's conduct;
- Respect the rights of others
- Ensure that the students' conduct contributes to a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging; and
- Positively contribute to the school and community

### Unacceptable Behavior

Students will refrain from, report and not tolerate bullying or bullying behavior directed towards others in the school, whether or not the behavior occurs within the school building, during the school day or by electronic means. Bullying behaviors are a form of aggression and can be physical, verbal, social or cyber.

"Bullying" means repeated and hostile or demeaning behavior by an individual in the school community where the behavior is intended to cause harm, fear or distress to one or more other individuals in the school community, including psychological harm or harm to an individual's reputation.

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- c) *Alberta Human Rights Act*, RSA 2000, c A-25.5: sections 7, 8 and 11
- d) 2017 Bill 24, Third Session, 29th Legislature, 66 Elizabeth II ("Bill 24")
- e) *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990), article 5
- f) *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, article 18(4) (which protects the rights of parents to guide their children's religious upbringing)



The following are examples of unacceptable behaviors may include:

- Behaviors that interfere with the learning of others and/or the school environment or that create unsafe conditions;
- Acts of bullying, harassment or intimidation/discrimination;
- Acts of violence, physical aggression or threatening behavior;
- Retribution against any person in the school who has intervened to prevent or report bullying or harassment, or to stop an incident that might cause harm to others.
- Illegal activity, such as possessions or use of weapons, possessions or use of alcohol, drugs or other forms of intoxicants on school property or at any other school related function (i.e. graduation, field trips); and
- Theft or damage of property

Consequences for unacceptable behavior:

School staff responses to unacceptable behavior will take into account a student's age, maturity and individual circumstances. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will receive support to behave in appropriate ways that contribute to the positive learning environment of the school. Equally as important is that students affected by inappropriate behavior will also be supported by the school.

School Staff responses may include:

- Logical consequences;
- Targeted interventions focused on skill building in areas such as managing emotions, focusing attention, resolving conflict or problem solving;
- Restorative processes;
- Mentoring;
- Peer-support networks
- Behavior plan;
- Regular check-ins with teachers, administrators, or school counselors;
- Suspension from an activity, school, one or more class periods, courses or education programs, or riding the school bus; and
- Expulsion from school

*Parents' Rights Respecting their Children's Education*

- Parents have a right and a responsibility to make decisions respecting the education of their children as reflected in the *School Act* preamble;
- sections 1(c) and 1(g) of *Alberta's Bill of Rights* recognizes and declares that in Alberta there exists without discrimination by reason of race, national origin, colour, religion, sexual orientation, sex, gender identity or gender expression, the following human rights and fundamental freedoms, namely the freedom of religion and the right of parents to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children;
- the School's students and parents have voluntarily selected an education infused with Sikh religion beliefs and values;

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- b) *Alberta Bill of Rights*, RSA 2000, c A-14: preamble, sections 1 and 2
- c) *Alberta Human Rights Act*, RSA 2000, c A-25.5: sections 7, 8 and 11
- d) 2017 Bill 24, Third Session, 29th Legislature, 66 Elizabeth II ("Bill 24")
- e) *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990), article 5
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### *Faith Based Independent Schools in Alberta*

- the Government of Alberta recognizes that parents have the right to choose a private school for their children and has provided financial support for private schools since 1967; (<https://education.alberta.ca/private-schools/private-schools-in-alberta/?searchMode=3>)

### *Faith Based Education at the School*

- the Gobind Sarvar School is a SIKH SCHOOL with an emphasis on providing the foundation for an understanding and practice of the Sikh way of life.
- the School ensures the availability of a Sikh-based program of studies for students whose parents desire an educational setting which operates in accordance with its philosophy, beliefs, core values, vision, theological commitments, and ethical standards which are set out respectively in its mission statement, educational philosophy, statement of faith, admissions policy, ethical statement and staff and student faith-based covenants (collectively the “Faith-based Foundational Documents”);
- the Faith-based Foundational Documents reflect the Sikh way of life and instills students with moral and spiritual values which are the basis upon which the School offers its educational programming and which are the core of the School’s identity;
- the School’s method of teaching Sikhism takes a denominational approach, which aims to provide the students with a sound formation in the basic beliefs, rituals and practices of Sikh Faith, including demonstrating good manners and treating others with kindness, acting according to the principles of virtue, excellence and grace and the realization that Sikhism cannot remain something purely internal, but must express itself in our relationships with others and the world around us.
- the School’s belief in its religious obligation to teach Sikhism is consistent with its organizational purpose and operation;
- the School endeavours to offer a holistic education to each student by embracing and teaching the values, traditions and teachings of Sikhism according to Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji while nurturing the pursuit of excellence in mind, body, heart and soul.

### *The School Commitment to providing a Safe, Caring, Welcoming and Safe Learning Environment*

- the School is committed to providing a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment in keeping with the vision, mission, and faith foundation of the School;
- Students will be respectful to each other – caring about their learning, including safety, and being considerate of others’ personal feelings and properties;
- Setting high standards for students

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- c) *Alberta Human Rights Act*, RSA 2000, c A-25.5: sections 7, 8 and 11
- d) 2017 Bill 24, Third Session, 29th Legislature, 66 Elizabeth II (“Bill 24”)
- e) *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990), article 5
- f) *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, article 18(4) (which protects the rights of parents to guide their children’s religious upbringing)



- Gobind Sarvar recognizes and affirms the rights of all staff members and enrolled students as provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act* and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Staff and students will not be discriminated against for reasons of race, age, ancestry, place of origins, color, religious beliefs, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical or mental disability, marital status, source of income, family status and sexual orientation as provided for in the *Alberta Human Rights Act* or the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.
- Sikhism carefully instills living according to specific individual and communal standards, both ethical and spiritual.
- Under Section 16.1 of the *School Act*, students have a right to establish a voluntary student organization intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment.

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- c) *Alberta Human Rights Act*, RSA 2000, c A-25.5: sections 7, 8 and 11
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## II. Faith-based Values are herein Incorporated by Reference

1. The following Sikh faith-based values and ethos are herein expressly incorporated into, and form an integral part of, this Faith-based Policy:

- **Integrity**  
Integrity is foundational to the Gobind Sarvar community. We value truthfulness, sincerity, and ethical work. Those who remain true to their internal guide are shining examples to the rest of humanity that we can live a nobler way of life in this world.
- **Resilience**  
Resiliency is important in the constant changing pace of life. Persevering in the face of external and internal stressors is learned by directing one's energy towards positivity and productivity.
- **Unity**  
We value the common spirit within the hearts of all humanity. Recognizing this enables us to have more mutually enriching interactions and to create a more connected community.
- **Self-Awareness**  
Introspection allows us to understand our thoughts, habits, and emotions. This gives individuals the ability to self-regulate and strengthens their emotional intelligence, which is critical in all aspects of life.
- **Gratitude**  
We value an attitude of appreciation. By exemplifying this to students we endeavour to equip them with the necessary tools to live a content and happy life.
- **Humility**  
We value humility as it opens doors for discussions and a willingness to learn from each other. It teaches us to learn from our mistakes, take success in stride, and to work in the collective best interest.
- **Creativity**  
We value creativity as it leads to novel ways of thinking and creating. It motivates us to to set high goals and work with resolve towards achieving them.
- **Respect**  
We value the inherent worth of individuals and strive towards building an attitude of professionalism and kindness throughout the Gobind Sarvar Community.

(The above referenced documents are collectively referred to as the “Foundational Values and Ethos.”)

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- b) *Alberta Bill of Rights*, RSA 2000, c A-14: preamble, sections 1 and 2
- c) *Alberta Human Rights Act*, RSA 2000, c A-25.5: sections 7, 8 and 11
- d) 2017 Bill 24, Third Session, 29th Legislature, 66 Elizabeth II (“Bill 24”)
- e) *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1990), article 5
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2. For further clarity, the Foundational Value and Ethos and the content of this Faith-based Policy form, and serve as the basis for, the provision of the School's faith-based education as legislatively permitted by the *School Act*. It is intended that all aspects of the School's provision of educational programming shall be guided by, based upon and infused with the principles set out in the Foundational Values and Ethos and this Faith-based Policy.

### III. Principles Arising in the Context of Canadian Law

1. Consistent with its mission and vision, the Board is committed to a safe, caring, respectful, inclusive, equitable, and welcoming learning and teaching environment for all students and staff. This environment shall be one that recognizes and respects student diversity, equity of learning opportunity for all students, respect for human rights, and that fosters a sense of belonging of all students and staff within a respectful school community.
2. The School recognizes that as a religious school, the application of legislation involving human rights may be a delicate exercise and that the School may be required to exercise some flexibility in its navigation of these potentially complex matters.
3. This Policy does not define one set of human needs as greater than another. This Policy supports and respects the individuality of all students and aims to create a positive and supportive environment focused on providing the best possible learning opportunity for each student.
4. The School believes that all students have the right to:
  - a) be treated fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect;
  - b) have matters of confidentiality dealt with in a respectful and careful manner;
  - c) freedom of conscience, expression, and association;
  - d) be welcomed in a positive, and respectful manner by all school personnel;
  - e) have access to appropriate supports, services, and protections;
  - f) have avenues of recourse (without fear of reprisal) available to them when they are victims of harassment, intimidation, bullying, and/or violence.
5. The School reserves the right to argue that the School, parents and students have a freedom of religion and that none of these entities may be forced in law to adhere to or refrain from a particular set of reasonably held religious beliefs or the individual's ability to act in accordance with his or her religious practice or belief.
6. *Alberta's Bill of Rights*, RSA 2000, c. A-14:
  - a) recognizes the Canadian Charter of rights and freedoms, and declares that in Alberta there exist without discrimination the freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and association and the right of parents to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children;
  - b) states that every law of Alberta shall, unless it is expressly declared by an Act of the Legislature that it operates notwithstanding the Alberta Bill of Rights, be so construed

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- b) *Alberta Bill of Rights*, RSA 2000, c A-14: preamble, sections 1 and 2
- c) *Alberta Human Rights Act*, RSA 2000, c A-25.5: sections 7, 8 and 11
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and applied as not to abrogate, abridge or infringe or to authorize the abrogation, abridgment or infringement of any of the rights or freedoms herein recognized and declared.

7. As noted in section 2 of the *School Act*, the exercise of any right or the receipt of any benefit under this Act is subject to those limitations that are reasonable in each circumstance under which the right is being exercised or the benefit is being received.
8. As noted in sections 3(1) and (2) of the *School Act*:
  - a) All education programs offered and instructional materials used in schools must reflect the diverse nature and heritage of society in Alberta, promote understanding and respect for others and honour and respect the common values and beliefs of Albertans;
  - b) For greater certainty, education programs and instructional materials referred to in subsection (1) must not promote or foster doctrines of racial or ethnic superiority or persecution, religious intolerance or persecution, social change through violent action or disobedience of laws.
9. Any limitation which is not reasonable and justifiable in the circumstances could have the effect of abrogating, abridging, or infringing upon the right of parents to make informed decisions respecting the education of their children.”
10. When addressing matters of human rights, whether in a classroom, club or activity setting, the Board, principal, teachers and other staff will act reasonably in the best interests of the student. In keeping with established jurisprudence, the school, the principal, teachers and other staff are free to act and communicate the school’s animating faith and/or values in a respectful manner, including (but not limited to) the following:
  - a) The School’s teachers and staff may describe and explain the school’s faith and/or value community beliefs, doctrines and ethical beliefs from the faith/perspective, and need not be required to adopt a neutral position;
  - b) The School’s teachers and staff will maintain a respectful tone of debate — both by conveying their own contributions in a respectful way, and by ensuring dialogue proceeds in accordance with respect, tolerance and understanding for those who hold different beliefs and practices;
  - d) Where the context of the classroom discussion requires it, the School’s teachers may identify the School community’s animating beliefs and/or values beliefs, why the School community follows those beliefs and/or values.
11. Gobind Sarvar School Policies in Support of **Support for Student Organizations** in accordance with Bill 24:
  - a) Gobind Sarvar School’s principal has a responsibility to provide a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging for all students and staff;

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- b) *Alberta Bill of Rights*, RSA 2000, c A-14: preamble, sections 1 and 2
- c) *Alberta Human Rights Act*, RSA 2000, c A-25.5: sections 7, 8 and 11
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- b) Gobind Sarvar School's principal shall immediately grant permission for the establishment of a student organization or the holding of an activity at the school premises;
- c) Gobind Sarvar School's principal shall within a reasonable time from the date the principal receives the request designate a staff member to serve as the staff liaison for the purposes of setting up that student organization or the holding of an activity at the school premises;
- d) Gobind Sarvar School's students shall have the right to name their Student Organization as Gay-Straight Alliances/Queer-Straight Alliances;
- e) Gobind Sarvar School's students have the right to include Gay-Straight Alliances/Queer-Straight Alliances in the name of an activity;
- f) Gobind Sarvar School's principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity;
- g) Gobind Sarvar School's principal does not require the approval of the superintendent or school authority or to follow other administrative processes before carrying out functions as set out above in this policy in support for school organization;
- h) Gobind Sarvar School's principal shall immediately inform the school authority and the Minister of Education of Alberta if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison referred to in Paragraph 3 of this Policy, and if so informed, the Minister of Education of Alberta shall appoint a responsible adult to work with the requesting students in organizing the activity or to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization at Gobind Sarvar School;
- i) Gobind Sarvar School's students may select a respectful and inclusive name for the organization or activity and that Gobind Sarvar School's principal shall not prohibit or discourage students from choosing a name that includes "gay-straight alliance" or "queer straight alliance" for an organization or activity;
- j) Gobind Sarvar School's principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity must be limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity. Gobind Sarvar School shall provide that notification, if any, which will be otherwise consistent with the usual practices relating to other student organizations and activities;
- k) Disclosure of any information regarding the students, school's policies or any other pertinent matter shall be governed and adhered to by Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA), RSA 2000, c F-25;
- l) Gobind Sarvar School has zero tolerance policy for discrimination of any student or class of students based on their race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, physical disability, mental disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, source of income of that student's parent(s) or guardian(s), family status or sexual orientation of that student or class of students.
- m) Parental notification around courses of study, educational programs or instructional materials, or instructional exercises does not apply to student participation in voluntary student organizations, including Gay-Straight Alliances/Queer-Straight Alliances.

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- c) *Alberta Human Rights Act*, RSA 2000, c A-25.5: sections 7, 8 and 11
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**Support for student organizations**

16.1 (1) If one or more students attending a school operated by a board request a staff member employed by the board for support to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, the principal of the school shall

a) immediately grant permission for the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at the school, and

b) subject to subsection (4), within a reasonable time from the date that the principal receives the request designate a staff member to serve as the staff liaison to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization or to assist in organizing the activity.

(3) The students may select a respectful and inclusive name for the organization or activity, including the name “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”, after consulting with the principal.

(3.1) For greater certainty, the principal shall not prohibit or discourage students from choosing a name that includes “gay-straight alliance” or “queer-straight alliance”.

(4) The principal shall immediately inform the board and the Minister if no staff member is available to serve as a staff liaison referred to in subsection (1), and if so informed, the Minister shall appoint a responsible adult to work with the requesting students in organizing the activity or to facilitate the establishment, and the ongoing operation, of the student organization at the school.

(6) The principal is responsible for ensuring that notification, if any, respecting a voluntary student organization or an activity referred to in subsection (1) is limited to the fact of the establishment of the organization or the holding of the activity.

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b) *Alberta Bill of Rights*, RSA 2000, c A-14: preamble, sections 1 and 2

c) *Alberta Human Rights Act*, RSA 2000, c A-25.5: sections 7, 8 and 11

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f) *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, article 18(4) (which protects the rights of parents to guide their children’s religious upbringing)