BISHOPS
DIOCESAN COLLEGE

Signs and Symbols Policy

The most commonly used sign or symbol is the flying of a flag on each of the three flagpoles near the Admin Block. The first pole is exclusively for the South African National flag. The second is exclusively for the Bishops flag. The third pole may be used to fly flags that meet the criteria set out in section 3.

Raising and/or lowering flags is done by pupils from White House on a daily basis during the week. “Cause” flags are kept by the Marketing Manager who issues them according to the appropriate time in the year.

1. Purpose and Values

Bishops is committed to creating an environment where every boy, staff member, and parent feels a sense of **belonging and dignity**, irrespective of race, religion, or sexual orientation. This policy provides an even-handed framework for the display of signs and symbols (flags, banners, ribbons) that support the school’s educational mission and its values of Courage, Humility, Integrity, Kindness, and Respect. In striving to be one of the leading Anglican boys’ schools in the world, Bishops develops young men of character. This includes being conscious of and supporting human rights issues such as the treatment of women and those who are seen to be “different” from the majority. As a leading boys’ school preparing boys for life in a world of difference where they are able to flourish, we are required to educate our boys about difference and how difference can be seen as a strength rather than something to fear.

2. Authority, Decision-Making and Consultation

- **Fiduciary Oversight:** The Council retains strategic oversight of the school’s character and approves policy framework.
- **Executive Authority:** The Principal and the School Executive hold the delegated authority for the day-to-day management of the school, including operational decisions to display or remove specific signs and symbols that are not reasonably contested. These decisions to display a sign or symbol such as a flag are to be made considering what is, in the opinion of the Executive, best for individual boys and the school as a whole, according to the principles of this policy. These

decisions are usually made annually at the start of the academic year. As the Executive meets every week, it is possible to make a decision swiftly.

- **Reserved for Council:** The Executive informs Council of any new flag or symbol and refers to Council any flag or symbol where either its introduction or removal is reasonably contested, setting out its recommendation to Council based on the criteria below. A flag or symbol is reasonably contested where flying it, or ceasing to fly it, would reasonably be seen as the school taking a side on a question that genuinely divides the school community. Where the Executive is in real doubt whether a matter is reasonably contested, it also refers the matter to Council with its recommendation.
- **Consultation:** In making such decisions, the Executive shall consult with the Student Representative Forum (SRF), the staff representatives, the Parents' Associations and the Old Diocesan Union to ensure the action is in the "best interests of the school's educational purpose". An objection from any of these groups prompts the Executive to assess whether the matter is reasonably contested; it does not of itself require a referral to Council. In making that assessment, the Executive gives greater weight to the views of the SRF, the staff representatives and the Parents' Associations, because they speak for those currently in the school.
- **Annual review:** Council reviews, at least annually, the flags and symbols displayed during the year.

  The Executive must provide clear reasons to fly a particular flag or to stop flying a flag, considering the benefits of either decision.

3. Criteria for Display

- **National and Institutional:** The South African National flag and the Bishops school flag are permanent symbols of our shared identity.

  Other symbols may be displayed if they fall into at least one of the following categories and are not covered by any of the exclusions listed in clause 4. Any symbols which are displayed must be **accompanied by intentional education**:

- **Community and Celebratory:** Symbols marking occasions of broad, shared celebration such as national sporting endeavours or the flag of visiting schools.
- **Pastoral Care:** Signs that promote the wellbeing and dignity of our students, or symbols of inclusion for marginalised groups.
- **Commemorative:** Symbols marking significant historical moments or respecting the memory of those lost in conflict or disaster.
- **Anglican Tradition:** Symbols aligned with the liturgical life and public witness of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa.

4. Exclusions

- **Geopolitical Symbols:** The only national flag that is flown is that of South Africa. Flags representing foreign regions or areas of specific geopolitical dispute (e.g., Ukraine, Russia, Israel, Palestine) will not be displayed, as the school remains focused on the direct needs of its own community. The school does not take sides in disputes external to its own community and stated purpose.
- **Other Religions:** While Bishops acknowledges and respects the significant days of other faiths (e.g., Eid, Diwali) through social media or education, it will not fly flags representing other religions, maintaining its identity as an Anglican institution.
- **Values Discordance:** No symbol will be flown that promotes values at odds with the school's stated values of Courage, Humility, Integrity, Kindness and Respect and the school's Anti-Discrimination Policy.

5. Introduction or Removal of Symbols

The flying of a new flag may be proposed through the Student Representative Forum, the staff representatives or the Parents' Associations. If these proposed flags meet the criteria above and are not reasonably contested, the Executive will make its decision based on the criteria, answering to its satisfaction, at least the following questions:

- What are the benefits of flying the flag compared with possible downsides?
- How does flying the flag contribute to the programme of the school and thus add to, or enhance, the school's educational initiatives and pastoral programme?
- What would the feelings be of the various stakeholders in the school should the flag be flown?
- Would the flying of the flag be consistent with the School's Values and Vision?
- Would the flying of the flag be supported or opposed by the Anglican Church of Southern Africa?
- Does flying the flag promote the ideals of the Constitution of South Africa?

The removal of a flag already being flown is decided by the Executive, with the exception of reasonably contested removals which are referred to Council. The Executive decision or recommendation must be made considering at least the following questions, in addition to the considerations identified in the bullet points immediately above:

- Is the flying of the flag now irrelevant?
- How stopping flying the flag may be perceived in the broader community and if there is reputational harm by removing the flag.
- Is the flag still contributing positively to the school environment?