

This paper sets out the background to SRE in NSW government schools, then gives an overview of how SRE teaching works in our Diocese (and how the various documents on our website fit together)!

## 1. Background to SRE in NSW government schools

SRE is mandated by the NSW Education Act (1990); of which ss 32-33 provide:

### 32 Special religious education

*(1) In every government school, time is to be allowed for the religious education of children of any religious persuasion, but the total number of hours so allowed in a year is not to exceed, for each child, the number of school weeks in the year.*

*(2) The religious education to be given to children of any religious persuasion is to be given by a member of the clergy or other religious teacher of that persuasion authorised by the religious body to which the member of the clergy or other religious teacher belongs.*

*(3) The religious education to be given is in every case to be the religious education authorised by the religious body to which the member of the clergy or other religious teacher belongs.*

*(4) The times at which religious education is to be given to children of a particular religious persuasion are to be fixed by agreement between the principal of the school and the local member of the clergy or other religious teacher of that persuasion.*

*(5) Children attending a religious education class are to be separated from other children at the school while the class is held.*

*(6) If the relevant member of the clergy or other religious teacher fails to attend the school at the appointed time, the children are to be appropriately cared for at the school during the period set aside for religious education.*

### 33 Objection to religious education

*No child at a government school is to be required to receive any general religious education or special religious education if the parent of the child objects to the child's receiving that education.*

The NSW Department of Education (DoE) has published 'Special Religious Education procedures' to help schools implement the Dept's Religious Education policy ([REimplementproced.pdf \(nsw.gov.au\)](#))

The provision of SRE is not funded by government, but it does take place under the jurisdiction of the school.

The delivery of SRE in schools is managed by religious persuasions. These groups must be approved as SRE providers by the Minister of Education. The Anglican Diocese of Armidale is an approved provider of SRE ([Special religious education and special education in ethics providers \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)).

Approved providers are responsible for:

- authorising the SRE curriculum used by their teachers, and providing an outline of the scope and sequence on their websites (or a web-link to the curriculum); and,
- authorising people to teach SRE on their behalf at local schools (including recruiting, training and authorising sufficient numbers of SRE teachers).

Schools can ask for verification of authorisation and proof of identity of SRE teachers – normally evidenced through carrying an authorisation card and wearing a nametag while on a school site.

SRE teachers and helpers are classed as ‘visitors’ to schools.

ICCOREIS (Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (NSW) Inc.) is a non-denominational body which represents “*many churches that provide religious education in public schools in NSW. We encourage consultation and cooperation between members. Our goal is to support, promote and develop quality religious education in public schools while respecting the integrity of each member and other approved providers.*” [ICCOREIS | Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools \(NSW\) Inc.](#)

## 2. SRE Teacher Authorisation

To be authorised as an SRE teacher (and this is also noted in our **Due Diligence Policy** which can be found on the Diocesan website) a person must:

- Have a WWCC which has been cleared and verified by their Vicar or Safe Ministry Rep;
- Have completed an SRE Authorisation Form;
- Be authorised by their Vicar;
- Have completed Code of Conduct and Child Protection training (through completing the Diocesan Safe Ministry Training and Safe Ministry Check form);
- Have completed SRE Teacher training, and then 2 hours of development training each subsequent year;
- Be observed (cf note 1 below) teaching SRE at your first lesson (and then once in each subsequent year) and receiving feedback (a sample form can be found here - [SRE Observation+Feedback Form.pdf \(squarespace.com\)](#) (there is an exemption to this requirement for those who are theologically trained at diploma level or above); and,
- Use an authorised curriculum.

**Note 1:** The Youthworks website states that ‘your first lesson needs be observed\* by either - An accredited SRE trainer; a Rector; a licensed paid ministry worker (eg Assistant Minister, Youth Minister, Children’s Minister), or a teacher or retired teacher. (\* You are exempt from being observed if you are theologically trained at diploma level or above). This first observation is about checking the ability of the teacher to see if they can be Authorised to teach SRE on behalf of the Denomination.

In subsequent years the observation is more about checking in with the teacher, upskilling and teacher development. This observation can be done by anyone from the ‘first observation’ groups of people, or by other SRE teachers or the classroom teacher.

Our website has the following documents in relation to SRE teacher authorisation:

- i) **SRE Authorisation Form** – this is a Diocesan document to be completed by anyone wanting to be authorised to teach SRE. It is signed by the applicant and authorised by their Vicar.
- ii) **SRE Teacher Authorisation Process** – this is a Diocesan document setting out the requirements to be authorised as an SRE teacher. It sets out the SRE Code of Conduct (which aligns with the Dept’s Code of Conduct (<https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2004-0020>)); provides information in relation to WWCC and Child Protection Training; includes an SRE Teacher Compliance Form and Acknowledgement Form by the SRE Teacher (both to be signed by

- the SRE Teacher), and includes a pro-forma letter to the School Principal notifying him/her of authorised SRE teachers (to be signed by the relevant SRE Co-ordinator).
- iii) **SRE Authorisation letter** (stand-alone provider or combined arrangement; updated in 2020) – from the SRE Co-ordinator to advise schools of the names of authorised SRE teachers.
  - iv) **SRE Continuation letter or Change in Arrangement letter** – to advise schools in future years as to whether arrangements and teachers continue for the coming year or want changes made;
  - v) **SRE Teacher Authorisation Card** – to be signed by the SRE Co-ordinator or Vicar, and carried by the SRE teacher whilst on school grounds.

### 3. Teacher training:

The DoE requires all SRE Providers to have in place a system of initial and ongoing training in the areas of child protection and classroom management for SRE teachers. ICCOREIS has set a benchmark for SRE training, called *The Basic Training Standard* – which has 7 modules:

- Module 1: Teaching SRE in Government Schools
- Module 2: Learning and Teaching
- Module 3: Preparing and Delivering a Lesson
- Module 4: Communicating in the Classroom
- Module 5: Introduction to the Bible
- Module 6: Classroom Experience (for High School SRE only)
- Module 7: Duty of Care (covered under our Safe Ministry training)

The Basic Training Standard is covered by the Anglican Youthworks *SRE Accreditation and Development Training* courses (and the Baptist *SRE Essentials* course, and the Presbyterian Church's *PY Combined Christian SRE Teacher Training* course). Some exemptions are available depending on prior learning (cf [New SRE teachers – Youthworks](#))

Our website has the following documents for teachers:

- i) **Teacher Basic training** – this is a Diocesan document (through ICCOREIS) setting out an overview of the basic SRE training standards organised into four domains of – context, knowledge, practice and professional learning. For each domain there are links and references to supporting documents or websites where the relevant training information can be found. Appendix A sets out expectations of SRE teachers.
- ii) **Teacher's Manual** – this is a Diocesan document (through ICCOREIS) setting out much of the detailed material needed for the Teacher Basic training above.
- iii) **SRE Teacher Self-reflection form** – this is a Diocesan document to assist SRE teachers reflect on their lesson preparation, interaction with the school, classroom management, teaching and learning, and a plan for further support/training/development.

### 4. Classroom matters:

- i) **Interactive whiteboards and Digital Projectors** – this is a Diocesan document (through ICCOREIS) with advice and tips on how to use IWB's and DP's
- ii) **Social Media Policy and Procedures & Audio-visual Material in Schools** – this is a Diocesan document (through ICCOREIS) setting out the policy in relation to SRE teacher use of social media, and what to be aware of when presenting AV material in schools.

**5. Complaints:**

- i) **Approved Provider Complaint form** – this is a Diocesan document (through ICCOREIS) to be completed by those wanting to make a complaint.
- ii) **SRE Complaints Handling Policy** – this is a Diocesan document outlining the current complaints handling procedure in the event of a complaint being made against an SRE teacher or helper, about the curriculum or about SRE co-ordination. The local Vicar is responsible for managing the complaints process.
- iii) **School Community and Consumer Complaint Procedure** – this is a DoE publication outlining procedures for complaints that have been made.

Thank you so much for being part of this great ministry and taking the good news of Jesus Christ to the students and staff of our local schools!

Should you have any queries on any aspect of SRE teaching, please do not hesitate to contact your local SRE Co-ordinator, our ICCOREIS rep Libby Lukins (at South Tamworth parish) or the Assistant to the Bishop, Ian Millican.