Anglican Church Newcastle

VOLUNTEER SRE TEACHER
ORIENTATION INFORMATION



PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

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Glossary



WELCOME

Welcome to SRE (School Scripture) in the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle.

Thanks for joining the largest ministry to children in NSW.

Please do not hesitate to contact CEY Ministries at the Diocesan Office if you need clarification of any of the issues outlined.



WHY TEACH CHRISTIAN SRE (SCHOOL SCRIPTURE)?

Although about 60% of Australians identify as Christian (ABS), only about 7% attend church regularly. SRE is about educating children in the faith of their families. We are able to bring a message from the bible, via the curriculum, that is not only life giving, but is also life changing! How good is that?

In NSW we are privileged, and supported by the law to be able to teach SRE. This unique opportunity isn't available in other places. For example, in NT, ACT and Tasmania, schools need to get permission to run SRE. In SA there is no SRE. In some ways, we are the envy of other nations such as the UK where SRE was removed from public schools in the 1970's.

BENEFITS OF SRE TO SCHOOLS, CHILDREN AND THE COMMUNITY:

- Brings an estimated $500-$1,000 per year to each school in SRE curriculum resources (depending upon school size).
- Contributes to Key Learning Areas of the school curriculum e.g. Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE).
- A knowledge of the bible aids in the study of western culture i.e. art, literature, language and law (Oxford University, UK).
- Provides an opportunity for children to develop their own spirituality.
- Promotes moral development and teaches Christian ethics i.e. the 10 Commandments.
- Provides an opportunity for children to explore the 'big issues', existential issues such as; life, death and purpose.
- Children explore the ethics and values underpinning Australia's legal system and society.
- Teaches children tools to use in times of crisis e.g. prayer, words of comfort from the bible. This helps build resilience.
- Affirms that each child is unique, valuable in their own right and of great worth to God.
- Has been in NSW public schools for 140 years since the state took over from the church in provision of education (1880's).
- Reinforces the Core Values of NSW Public's Schools; integrity, excellence, respect, responsibility, co-operation, participation, care, fairness.
- Most medical research has found positive associations between increased spirituality and better health outcomes (Medical Journal of Australia).



SRE CODE OF CONDUCT

OUR SRE VOLUNTEERS NEED TO BE COMMITTED TO:

- Child Safety as an overall priority.
- Having respect for all people (children and adults) and their opinions including their own beliefs, and views on religion.

  Note: Children attend SRE at the choice of their parents/carers. They may or may not personally subscribe to the Christian faith, and we need to be mindful of this.
- Being courteous and polite.
- Providing SRE lessons to the best of your ability, aiming for excellence.
- Creating a trustworthy and positive relationship with their Parish, parents, students, classroom teachers, principals and SRE volunteers from other denominations.
- Providing a safe and healthy working environment within the school classroom.
- Supporting the Diocesan agreed values.

VALUES AGREED TO BY DIOCESAN SRE VOLUNTEERS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Active Faith
- Trust
- Respect
- Integrity
- Loyalty
- Openness
- Service
- Commitment
- Relationships

SRE VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

JOB DESCRIPTION

Volunteering to teach SRE is a partnership between us, God, the school principal and teachers, children and parents. It involves teaching from a curriculum and bringing a unique opportunity for faith and spirituality into the classroom. When delivering a lesson, always try and imagine that the children's parents and the school principal are in the lesson with you.

Under the Education Act 1990, parents have the right to Special Religious Education for their child/ren in a NSW public school. This is carried out by authorized volunteers from 'approved providers' i.e. faith groups approved by Department of Education (DoE). Here is what the Education Act says:

SECTION 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.*

ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS OF A VOLUNTEER

1. Working With Children Check, (see page 9 for procedure) and be in receipt of a Clearance Number for working with children. This lasts for 5 years. (Required by: Office of the Children's Guardian). This number is to be verified by the Parish and Diocese. You may not teach SRE, or work with children without a verified WWCC Number.
2. Safe Ministry Training (including Mandatory Reporting) every three years (Required by: Anglican Diocese of Newcastle and Department of Education, DoE). Copy of your Certificate to Diocese.
3. Initial and on-going training and professional development in classroom management (required by ADN and DoE). Undertake to complete, or have completed all 7x modules of Basic SRE Training over a year, 2 hours of professional development each year after. Attend a module refresher every 5 years.
4. You must be authorized by your priest/member of the clergy.
   This involves filling in a Teacher's Engagement Form, obtaining an authorization card and fulfilling steps 1-3. *You also need to meet additional requirements from the* (Diocesan) *Volunteer and Other Church Workers Policy (ADN).*
5. You must carry your authorization card and wear a name badge at all times when on school grounds, and provide photo identification if requested.
6. Have an active Christian faith.
7. Teach with "sensitivity and in an age appropriate manner" (DoE).
8. Carry out self-reflection of your teaching (DoE).
9. Be able to use or be trained in classroom technology (DoE).
10. Be willing to have ongoing mentoring (DoE).

OTHER REQUIREMENTS

1. Enjoy working with children – if you enjoy working with children, this will show in your lessons. Studies show that children will remember more about you than your lesson content.
2. It would be helpful, but not essential to have some formal or informal training in Theology.
3. Ability to work in a joint-denominational team. Most SRE in the Hunter is delivered joint denominationally. So we are normally representing 'the church' rather than our own particular denomination or doctrine.
4. Willingness to attend occasional meetings and training workshops.
5. Willingness to have your lesson assessed annually by a minister or another SRE volunteer, and receive feedback.
6. A prayerful approach.



HOW DOES BEING AN SRE VOLUNTEER WORK?

HOW TO BEGIN

We never recommend an SRE volunteer 'jump straight in' and teach SRE. We recommend 6-12 months mentoring by an experienced SRE teacher to get a feel for how the lessons work. You need to become authorised and complete your Working With Children Check before you can begin, and attend training when it becomes available. Do try and find a prayer partner to support you.

ARRIVING AT THE SCHOOL

When you arrive at the school you will need to be wearing your name badge, and you will need to sign into the school electronically either on your phone or using the school ipad. Volunteer SRE teachers can take a class from Kindy to year 6. The lessons normally go for 30 mins, but may be longer, up to an hour, if SRE is being run in a seminar style. The law allows for up to 1 hour per week for SRE.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Often, though not always, the classroom teacher will help with classroom management/behaviour management of the students. Ask the classroom teacher what classroom management techniques are normally used. You may like to follow these to maintain consistency e.g. clapping, '1,2,3 eyes to me'.

The curriculum will include activities like: bible stories, songs, activity workbooks, prayers, plays, games. You would normally choose several of these activities for a lesson, focused around a specific bible passage, often along a theme. Usually there is an Electronic Whiteboard you can use.

Different children learn in different ways. Try to choose a mix of activities that cover a range of learning styles in your lesson e.g. visual (seeing), auditory (listening) and kinesthetic (doing).

SPECIAL SERVICES/ASSEMBLIES

At Christmas and Easter, most SRE teams have a combined SRE assembly or service themed appropriate to the occasion. This may be run by a visiting group, or the SRE classes may be involved in presenting songs/plays/prayers. This may be held on the school grounds or at a local church. Please ensure any visitors are aware of protocols.

HOW DO I OBTAIN A WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECK?

1. Complete a brief form online https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-working-children-check or telephone this number 13 77 88

2. Take the Application Number which you will receive to the Service New South Wales to apply for a check.

   You will then be sent, via email or post, a Clearance Number or a Bar (if a Bar, you are not allowed to work with children).

3. This Clearance Number must be given to your Parish and to the Diocese, and anywhere else where you work with children.

   It is your number and should be kept safe. (It is like a Tax File Number)

   Some public schools like to keep a copy of your WWCC number.

NOTE: YOU MAY NOT TEACH SRE, OR WORK WITH CHILDREN WITHOUT A VALID AND VERIFIED WWCC NUMBER.

SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DEFINITION

Special religious education (SRE) is education in the beliefs and practices of an approved religious persuasion by authorised representatives of that persuasion (DoE).

In summary, Christian Special Religious Education is:

- Authorized volunteers from approved churches
- Educating children about the (Christian) faith
- Using an authorized curriculum



TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In this region, members of ICCOREIS and Hunter SRE work together as *SRE Essentials* to provide Basic SRE Training, (which meets the ICCOREIS Training Standard). There are 7x modules. The training is normally run via Zoom in the daytime, either during the week, or on Saturdays. Each module is approximately 2 hours long. Thereafter, you need to attend a *refresher* for the 7x modules every 5 years. These modules can also be done online https://www.christiansre.com.au/teacher-training-options

You can also access similar training run by Godspace www.godspace.org.au/training.html or training run by Anglican Youthworks in the Sydney Diocese, see https://www.youthworks.net/sre/sre-accreditation-training or Presbyterian Youth https://pynsw.org.au/sre/. The Hunter Christian SRE Committee also provides regular ongoing training days in different locations throughout the year, and a Co-ordinator's Lunch at the beginning of each year. Ongoing training days provide the opportunity for updates, training and time to share skills and experience with other SRE volunteers.

To retain your SRE authorisation, you will need to do 2x hours professional development each year to update your skills, eg attend an event, watch videos or read a book on classroom management and SRE issues. You need to REFRESH your module training every 5 years.

NOTE: High School SRE teachers are normally paid and supervised by an 'SRE Board'. They usually have a teaching and theological background.

FAQ'S

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SRE CO-ORDINATOR?

Churches should have an SRE Co-ordinator to help recruit and answer questions about SRE. At each school there should also be an SRE Coordinator who liaises with the school (on behalf of the team of SRE volunteers) about timetabling, special assemblies, advertising, issues etc. They often also organize periodic meetings and prayer times for the SRE teachers from that school. The school should also have an SRE Co-ordinator (normally an Assistant Principal or the Principal) who organizes the classes for each year, and is a contact person for SRE.

WHO PAYS FOR LESSON RESOURCES AND MATERIALS?

These can be paid for in various ways:

- In some areas funds are raised by an 'SRE Board' to pay for curriculum materials
- Some Parishes have a budget for SRE curriculum materials
- Some SRE volunteers pay for their own materials.
- Other resources such as craft resources are usually paid for by SRE teachers themselves.

CAN I WRITE MY OWN LESSON MATERIAL?

No, the law says that you must use an authorized curriculum that is available online for parents to view.

WHO DO I SPEAK TO IF I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THE SCHOOL?

If you are having a problem e.g. with a particular student, you should first discuss it with the classroom teacher. If this doesn't resolve the problem, then you could speak to your Volunteer SRE Co-ordinator at the school who may take it to the principal. If you are having a problem with the teacher e.g. runs other activities during an SRE lesson, you should first talk to the teacher (they may not be aware that the law says that the school should not run any formal activities during an SRE lesson). If this doesn't help, you can refer the matter to the Volunteer SRE Co-ordinator and school principal.

WHAT IF A CHILD ASKS A QUESTION THAT I CANNOT ANSWER?

Be positive "That's a great question…". But you need to be aware of sticking to the curriculum, and any controversial issues in this regard. Please avoid and be sensitive regarding the following topics : sexuality, violence, hell, death, and any others specific to your school.

WHAT IF I CANNOT RELATE TO MY CURRICULUM?

If you really cannot relate to a specific lesson, it will be hard to teach. You may leave it out and choose another. If you are finding great difficulty overall with the curriculum, you may want to look into using another curriculum (although everyone at the school will use the same curriculum as they normally have a 3 year cycle). There are three main curricula authorized by this Diocese for use:

- Connect (Produced by CEP Youthworks)
- Godspace (Produced by Baptist Church of NSW and ACT)
- Think Faith for High School (CEP)



CAN PEOPLE FROM OTHER FAITHS E.G. MUSLIMS OR HINDUS TEACH SRE?

Yes they can, and they need to adhere to the same requirements.

CAN I ADD THINGS TO MY LESSON E.G. YOUTUBE CLIPS?

Any additional multimedia e/g/ video clips, songs, videos need to be cleared first with your curriculum provider's approval process.

WHAT IF A CHILD ASKS ABOUT A CONTENTIOUS ISSUE SUCH AS CREATIONISM OR HELL?

Always focus on the positive, and redirect them gently and respectfully back to the lesson. You should avoid focusing on violence, death, evil spirits, sexuality or hell in your lessons. Some children genuinely want to know about these things, as they hear adults talking about them, while others might be trying to 'stir' or get attention.

In terms of the heaven/ hell question, the short answer is that it's not anyone's place to decide who goes to heaven or hell – that's up to God. In terms of creationism for example, this is an issue that Christians hold different views about. So it's OK to say that 'Some Christians believe x…while other Christians believe y…' For example, 'Some Christians believe that the world was literally created in 7x 24 hour days, while others take the view that the bible says a day is like a thousand years so it could have been thousands of years. But all Christians believe that God made the world.' Always remember to own and ground statements of belief eg 'I believe…', 'Christians believe…', 'Some Christians believe…' or 'It says in the bible in Hebrews chapter x verse y…'

FOR HELP OR INFORMATION

CEY MINISTRIES

Kate Baker
Diocesan SRE Co-ordinator
Email: katebaker@newcastleanglican.org.au
Phone: 49263733
Office Hours normally Mon, Thurs and Fri 10am-2pm

USEFUL LINKS AND CONTACTS

CHRISTIAN SRE
www.christiansre.com.au

EDUCATION ACT 1990, SECTION 32: SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
https://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ea1990104/s32.html

HUNTER CHRISTIAN SRE COMMITTEE (HUNTER CHRISTIAN SRE)
Tel: 0490 130 576 www.huntersre.com.au

ICCOREIS (INTER CHURCH COMMISSION ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS)
www.iccoreis.asn.au

OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN (WWCC)
Tel: 02 82193777 https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/working-children-check

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES
https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/pd-2002-0074-01

GLOSSARY

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ADN	Anglican Diocese of Newcastle
CCYP	Commission for Children and Young People
DoE	Department of Education
ICCOREIS	Inter Church Commission on Religious Education In Schools
SRE	Special Religious Education (aka School Scripture)
WWCC	Working With Children Check

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