



# Special Religious Education Policy (SRE)

## Rationale

The Education Reform Act 1990 requires all government schools to allow for the provision of Special Religious Education, (often called Scripture) by authorised religious persuasions during part of the school week, set aside for that particular purpose.

Special Religious Education is given on the school premises and within school time once each week. Only those religious persuasions, that have been given DET approval, can provide instruction in their own particular persuasion. A list of approved providers is available at: <http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/religion/index.htm>

In accordance with the NSW Education Act, provision is made for a 30 minute Religious Education class each week (Years K-6) and 50 minutes (Years 7-9) at Bulahdelah Central School. Classes are non-denominational. SRE classes are taken by authorised representatives of the Bulahdelah Central Christian Education Association, each Thursday. The BCCEA is a participating board of Generate Ministries.

The Act also allows parent discretion as to whether their children attend these classes. Parental choice of scripture class or non-attendance is sought by the school at the beginning of the year. As part of enrolment, parents and guardians will be advised of the nature of SRE and the arrangements for those children who do not attend SRE.

At Bulahdelah Central School, non-scripture students, in primary grades, are under the supervision of a classroom teacher. In secondary grades, students are supervised by the deputy principal secondary.

## Role of the School

- Parents will be advised annually through the newsletter of the organisation of SRE classes for that year. This information includes the name of the SRE coordinator and contact information. This advice also includes options if parents/ caregivers do not wish their children to attend SRE, including special education, in ethics, where it is available. (Not currently available at Bulahdelah Central School.)
- Teachers of SRE will be provided only with the names of students in their classes and any specific information about students in their class such as disability, which may impact on the performance of that particular student.
- 'Students not attending SRE will be supervised at the school in a location separate from SRE classes. This is to include homework, reading or private study but does not include timetabled lessons or scheduled school activities in accordance with DET policy.' (Section A – 3; A -11)
- The school will appoint a staff coordinator who will liaise with the SRE coordinator, maintain records of authorised SRE teachers from the BCCEA and prepare advice for parents.

- In 2015, SRE will be coordinated by Mrs Sonia McDonald (SRE school coordinator) in consultation with Mr Frank Horwill (SRE representative).

### **SRE Coordinator Duties Include:**

- Arranging consultations by the middle of Term 4 between the school and representatives of the approved religious persuasions to determine the SRE organisation for the ensuing year
- Liaising with SRE teachers to:
  - familiarise them with the procedures and operations of the school, especially at the beginning of the year.
  - advise them of any variations of school routine affecting SRE.
- Maintaining SRE records, including:
  - obtaining an up-to-date list of the authorised SRE teachers.
  - ensuring that SRE teachers are given a list of the names of students in their class.
- Preparing advice for parents and caregivers on the organisation and composition of SRE classes and informing them of any changes.
- Issuing Certificates of Exemption where applicable, as well as keeping records of the parent's written request and the Certificate of Exemption and providing of a copy of the school's Certificate of Exemption to the student.
- First contact for resolution of any concerns or complaints related to SRE at Bulahdelah Central School.

### **Role of Parents**

- Parents have the right to withdraw from or alternatively include their child in Special Religious Education. They do not have to provide a reason. This request must be made in writing to the principal or indicated at the time of enrolment.
- A Certificate of Exemption will be issued under Section 33 of the Education Act after such request is made. Parents will be provided with a copy of the Certificate of Exemption.

### **Role of Providers**

- The appointment of SRE teachers is the responsibility of the BCCEA /Generate Ministries. They must also provide sufficient SRE teachers. Where a teacher is unavailable the principal must be informed.
- Authorise the materials and pedagogy used by special religious education teachers.
- Provide annual assurance that authorised teachers use only materials and pedagogy approved by the provider.
- Make lesson content accessible on a website or at least provide a program outline and curriculum scope and sequence documents.
- Provide information about the content of lessons when requested by parents/caregivers/principals.

**Further information regarding NSW Department of Education and Training, Special Religious Education Policy can be found at:-**

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/learning/yrk12focusareas/religious/index.php>

## Appendix

Special Religious Education and General Religious Education fact sheet

SRE participation letter



# Special Religious Education and General Religious Education

Special Religious Education is education in the beliefs and practices of an approved religious persuasion by authorised representatives of that persuasion.

## Background

Section 32 of the *Education Act 1990* requires that 'in every government school, time is to be allowed for the religious education of children of any religious persuasion.' It also allows for general religious education.

The revised Religious Education policy (01/06/2013) and implementation procedures can be found at:

<http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/religion/>

## Definitions

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

## General Religious Education

**(GRE)** is education about the world's major religions, what people believe and how that belief affects their lives. This is taught through the school curriculum.

## Responsibilities

### Principals

Principals must allow time for SRE where representatives of approved providers are available. On average, not less than 30 minutes and not more than one hour per week should be allocated. The lesson period should be consistent with the age and attention span of the students.

Parents/caregivers have the right to know how SRE will be organised each year and which religious organisations will deliver it.

Parents/caregivers have the right to choose not to have their children attend SRE. Parents/caregivers are to be advised of options if they do not wish their children to attend SRE, including special education in ethics where it is available.

Principals will support SRE by ensuring that no academic instruction or formal school activities occur during the time set aside for special religious education. Students not attending SRE should be in a separate space from these classes and be provided with meaningful activities such as reading, private study or completing homework.

## Providers

SRE is delivered by religious persuasions that have the approval of the Minister for Education for that purpose. A list of approved providers is available at

<http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/religion/>

Only persons authorised by approved religious persuasions teach SRE.

A provider must ensure that all personnel/volunteers have had a Working with Children Check or signed a Working with Children Check Declaration for volunteers depending on the phase-in status of the volunteer:

<http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/Working-with-children/working-with-children-check>

Providers must publish age-appropriate curriculum on their website.

## Contact Information

**Primary Curriculum Advisor**  
T 9244 5484

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and Primary Education  
Level 3, 1 Oxford Street  
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*A school with PRIDE!!*

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### Dear Parent/ caregiver,

Parents/caregivers in public schools have the right to have their children receive instruction in their preferred religious persuasion, where authorised teachers of that persuasion are available.

At present Bulahdelah Central School runs a generic special religious education program staffed by authorised volunteers of approved religious persuasions.

Please indicate if you wish your child to attend, or indicate that you wish to withdraw your child from special religious education, by completing and returning the tear-off form below.

Students continue in the same arrangement each year, unless a parent/caregiver has requested a change in writing. At any time, you have the right to change your SRE nomination or to withdraw your child from the nominated lessons. A note to the Principal will affect this change.

Regards,  
Don Hudson  
Principal

### I wish my child to attend the special religious education program offered at Bulahdelah Central School

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- OR

### I wish to withdraw my child from special religious education

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

I do not wish my child to attend any of the school's SRE programs provided by approved providers of SRE.

Signature of Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_