

Anglican Diocese of Sydney
Policy on the Provision of Special Religious Education in Government Schools

The Diocese welcomes the opportunity afforded to it and other religious persuasions to deliver quality Special Religious Education to students in Government primary and secondary schools. It acknowledges that the purpose for which access is provided is to deliver well thought-out Bible-based educational programs using contemporary teaching methods and suited to the appropriate stage of students' faith development.

The approved provider is the Anglican Church, Diocese of Sydney.

The Executive Director of the Anglican Education Commission is the official point of contact between the Anglican Diocese of Sydney and the NSW Department of Education and Training in relation to Special Religious Education.

The Diocese, as the officially approved provider, is required to ensure that all SRE teachers authorised by it have signed a Prohibited Employment Declaration as required under the Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998; that they have undertaken appropriate Safe Ministry Training prior to their engagement as SRE teachers, and that none of them has a criminal conviction for a crime against a minor, violence, sexual assault or provided prohibited drugs.

The Diocese is required to certify in writing that these procedures are in place and are being implemented.

Although the selection and authorisation of SRE teachers occurs at the parish level, and records need to be kept at that level, the Diocese itself needs to maintain an accurate database pertaining to these matters.

The Selection and Authorisation of Voluntary SRE Teachers

The minister in charge of each church is responsible for the selection and induction of the persons to be authorised to deliver SRE on behalf of the Diocese within the parish. The persons selected need to meet the requirements mentioned above including the signing of the Prohibited Employment Declaration and the SRE Teacher's Engagement Form.

The minister in charge is responsible for arranging for each SRE teacher to undertake Safe Ministry Training. SRE teachers need to update this training every three years.

The minister in charge is also responsible for ensuring that each person authorised to teach SRE who has not undertaken Christian Education Accreditation recognises that he/she will be required to do so during the first six months of their authorisation.

Persons authorised to teach SRE on behalf of the Diocese are to be issued with a Blue Authorisation Card which will have a currency of two calendar years.

Provision of Training

Anglican Youthworks, through its Schools Ministry Advisers, will conduct Christian Education Accreditation Programs, both as an induction for new teachers and ongoing training for current teachers. The same Advisers will assist ministers in charge with the delivery of Safe Ministry Training for persons to be authorised as SRE teachers.

Curriculum and Resources

It is the expectation of the NSW Department of Education and Training that the time allocated to SRE is used for educational purposes and that those authorised to teach on behalf of a particular religious persuasion use the curriculum approved by their respective religious persuasion. The curriculum and resources approved by the Anglican Diocese of Sydney are Christian Education Publications, including CONNECT.

Quality Assurance

Anglican Youthworks, through its Schools Ministry Advisers, and in conjunction with ministers in charge, is responsible for establishing and maintaining a quality assurance system whereby parents, students, individual schools and the Department can be assured that SRE teachers are delivering high-quality educational programs.

Maintenance of Database

Anglican Youthworks will carry out an audit of the SRE Teachers Database every two years. Ministers will be expected to notify Youthworks whenever an individual's authorisation changes or terminates.

Extent of Provision

Ideally, the Anglican Diocese of Sydney would like to be able to provide an SRE program in every government school every week to every student whose parents have requested it. In reality, the Diocese recognises that, for some primary schools this is no longer possible, and in the case of many secondary schools, it is often not possible or even practicable.

On the other hand, as the law stands, schools are not permitted to conduct other educational activities at the same time as SRE is being taught to students whose parents have requested it.

The Diocese is of the opinion that where a church, which has been approved as a provider of SRE, knows that it will not be able to supply authorised teachers, whether it be to a particular school, year/grade, or classes, it should notify the schools concerned, preferably no later than the beginning of Term 4 of the preceding year, so that the schools can make alternative arrangements for the coming year.

Resolution of Problems

Difficulties relating to the provision of SRE in a particular school should be resolved by the minister in charge and the principal of the school. The Schools' Ministry Advisers may be able to assist or provide advice. Matters that cannot be resolved at the local level by the minister or the Adviser should be referred to the Executive Director of the Anglican Education Commission.

Cross Authorisation

The Department requires SRE teachers who are employed by Boards to be authorised by each of the religious persuasions on whose behalf they operate. The Boards do not have approved provider status. So far as the Anglican Diocese of Sydney is concerned, if the Anglican church is a party to a Board, the appropriate local Anglican minister must certify that each of the conditions outlined on the SRE Teacher's Engagement Form have been met for this employee even though the employee may not be a member of the Anglican Church. Similar requirements apply in respect to the cross-authorisation of voluntary SRE teachers in primary and secondary schools. The local Anglican minister must certify that the SRE teacher meets the requirements set out above as if they were delivering exclusively to a class of Anglican students.