### Educational Context

*The Department of Education requires schools to have a published policy on Special Religious Education (SRE).*

*This school policy and procedures document should be read in conjunction with the Department of Education’s* ***Religious Education Policy*** *and the* ***Religious Education Implementation Procedures.***

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### These can be found at [www.det.nsw.edu.au](http://www.det.nsw.edu.au)

**Definitions**

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

*General religious education* is about the world’s major religions, what people believe and how that belief affects their lives. It is taught mainly through the school curriculum.

*Studies of Religion* is a 2 Unit course for the HSC which is approved for study by BOSTES. This course is offered in Stage 6 at Ashfield Boys High School when student demand exists and the school has appropriately qualified staff to teach the course.

**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.

**Parent/caregiver rights**

**The right to religious education –** Parents/caregivers have the right to have their children receive instruction in their religious persuasion, where authorised teachers of that persuasion are available.

**The right of choice** – Parent/caregivers may nominate an alternative persuasion, where SRE cannot be offered for students of a particular religious persuasion, or for other reasons. Parent/caregivers also have the right to choose not to have their children attend SRE.

**The right to information –** Parents/caregivers have the right to know how special religious education will be organised each year and which religious organisations will deliver it. This information is provided through enrolment information, the school website and school newsletter. SRE providers can assist the school in this regard by providing information about their programs.

**Responsibilities of Ashfield Boys High School for SRE**

**Provision of special religious education**

* The Principal allows time for SRE where authorised representative of approved providers are available.
* SRE is an integral part of school activities, taking place in school hours and under jurisdiction of the school.
* The Principal supports SRE by ensuring that no academic instruction or formal school activities occur during time set aside for special religious education.
* The Principal also supports SRE by making adequate facilities available for the provision of special religious education, including timetable provisions and classrooms.

**Teaching special religious education**

* SRE is delivered by religious persuasions that have the approval of the Minister for Education for that purpose. At Ashfield Boys High School the SRE program is coordinated by Mr L. Alevizos. Current providers of SRE are; Marguerite Martin who represents St Vincent’s Parish Ashfield and coordinates the Catholic scripture teachers. David Balzer who is a Minister at the Ashfield Presbyterian Church and coordinates the Protestant scripture teachers. Rouba Kodr who coordinates the Islamic Special Education Program (ISRE) and represents the Islamic Council of NSW (Greenacre). Father George Liangas who is a priest at St Nectarios Church at Burwood and coordinates the Greek Orthodox scripture teachers. All of the coordinators are authorised as SRE teachers by the following bodies. The Anglican Diocese of Sydney, and cross-authorised by Presbyterian Church of Australia (NSW), Baptist Union of NSW and Uniting Church in Australia (NSW Synod). Other authorised providers include the Catholic Diocese of Sydney, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia (Redfern) and the Islamic Council of NSW (Greenacre).
* Only persons authorised by approved religious persuasions teach special religious education. All staff must have a NSW Working with Children Check.

**Timing of SRE at Ashfield Boys High School**

* SRE lessons are offered to students in Years 7-10 on Thursday for one (1) period every second even week after recess, including Greek Orthodox, Catholic, Islam and Protestant.

**Information for parents/caregivers**

* Parents/caregivers are advised how SRE classes are organised, including the religious persuasions that will be providing SRE, through enrolment information, the school website and the school newsletter.

**Enrolment in special religious education**

* At enrolment, parents/caregivers will be advised:
* of SRE options at the school, including the religious persuasions providing SRE and arrangements made for students whose parents/caregivers indicate that they are not to attend SRE
* that they may nominate an alternate persuasion, where SRE is not offered for students of a particular religious persuasion, or for other reasons.
* Where a religious persuasion was nominated on enrolment, the student is enrolled in a SRE class of the religious persuasion identified on the student’s enrolment record.
* Where a religious persuasion was not nominated on enrolment or the nominated religious persuasion is not available as a SRE program at ABHS, parents/caregivers are asked to complete a SRE preference form which outlines all SRE options available at the school. Parents/caregivers have the right to choose any of the SRE options available or to choose non-special religious education.
* A parent/caregiver may at any time notify the school in writing that they do not wish their child to attend SRE.
* Students are to continue in the same arrangement as the previous year, unless a parent/caregiver has requested a change.



Excerpt from page 2 of Application to enrol in a NSW Government School

**Students not attending special education**

* In the times set aside for SRE, students not attending are supervised by teachers in separate classrooms
* Students will be supervised by their teacher and may engage in reading, private study and completing homework

**Communication**

* The school will ensure parents/caregivers and the wider community are aware of special religious education and alternative activities offered at the school, and any changes to SRE will be communicated to the school community.
* Early during Term 4 each year, SRE coordinators are informed of estimated numbers for special religious education classes for the following year to assist in recruiting teachers.
* SRE teachers will also be informed if there are any changes to timetabling that will affect SRE classes.

**Information about students**

* Student information is confidential and teachers of SRE are only to be given:
* the names of students in their classes
* any special information, such as disability or special needs, which might affect the health, behaviour or performance of particular students.

**Information about lesson content**

* The principal is not responsible for, and does not disseminate details of, lesson content for SRE, but will provide the name and contact details of the approved provider or their local representative. See below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Protestant**  Dave Balzer,  **SRE Coordinator**  Minister Ashfield Presbyterian Church.  Email: david\_balzer@yahoo.com.au | **Roman Catholic**  Marguerite Martin  **SRE Coordinator**  St Vincent’s Parish Ashfield.  Email: marguerite@vinash.org.au |
| **Islam**  Rouba Kodr  Office Manager  Islamic Special Religious Education  Email: [info@isre.org.au](mailto:info@isre.org.au) | **Greek Orthodox**  Fr George Liangas  Parish Priest  St Nectarios Greek Orthodox Church, Burwood  Email: [stnectariosburwood@gmail.com](mailto:stnectariosburwood@gmail.com) |

**Student behaviour management**

* Teachers retain duty of care for students and intervene in cases where it is necessary to maintain good order and conduct, and will pursue such cases with the representative of the approved provider.

**Complaints**

* The principal will take appropriate steps and notify the representative of the approved provider if a written complaint is received concerning alleged teaching inefficiency or inappropriate lesson content.
* If the Principal receives allegations of improper behaviour or other complaints of a serious nature it will be managed in accordance with the Department’s policies and procedures.

**School special religious education coordinator**

* The HT TAS is the school’s SRE coordinator. Duties of the coordinator include:
* arranging meetings early in Term 4 with representative of the approved religious providers to discuss SRE organisation for the following 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 special religious education records including:
* an up-to-date list of the authorised SRE teachers from the approved religious providers.
* A list of the names of students in each class for SRE teachers
* Advising parents/caregivers of arrangements for SRE classes for the next year and ongoing information about any changes as they occur.

**Conscientious objection on religious grounds to part of a course study**

The Education Act 1990 Section 26 allows an exemption for students from attending classes at the request of parents/caregivers who conscientiously object on religious grounds to particular part of a course of study.

We will respond sensitively to the beliefs of parents/caregivers and their sons and take all steps to minimise feelings of discomfort or embarrassment on the part of students.

As a school, we remind all staff, students and parents/caregivers that:

* parents/caregivers have the right under the Act to conscientiously object and take action
* the school will provide information about courses if requested
* we will provide appropriate supervision or alternative studies
* we will advise parents/caregivers about any implication for the award of the Record of School Achievement or Higher School Certificate.
* we will provide a copy of the school’s certificate of exemption to the student.
* we will keep a record of the written request by parents/caregivers and the certificate of exemption.

**Chaplains**

School Chaplaincy does not fall within the religious education policy. For more information on the Commonwealth National School Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program please use the following link.

<https://www.education.gov.au/national-school-chaplaincy-programme>

**Voluntary student activities of a religious nature in schools**

Voluntary religious activities and prayer groups are not part of SRE, but may operate under the auspices and supervision of the Principal.

The Principal will ensure that:

* parental permission is obtained
* appropriate child protection checks and practices in relation to any volunteers coming from outside the school are completed
* the content of the activities undertaken are monitored
* student’s or members of religious persuasions do not engage in attempts to proselytise or convert non-adherents of their religion to their faith in the course of school authorised activities.

### Related NSW Department of Education Policies

**Religious Education Policy**

[**https://portalsrvs.det.nsw.edu.au/f5-w-68747470733a2f2f6465747777772e6465742e6e73772e6564752e6175$$/policies/curriculum/schools/spec\_religious/PD20020074\_i.shtml?level=Schools**](https://portalsrvs.det.nsw.edu.au/f5-w-68747470733a2f2f6465747777772e6465742e6e73772e6564752e6175$$/policies/curriculum/schools/spec_religious/PD20020074_i.shtml?level=Schools)

**Religious Education Implemattaion procedures**

[**https://portalsrvs.det.nsw.edu.au/f5-w-68747470733a2f2f6465747777772e6465742e6e73772e6564752e6175$$/policies/curriculum/schools/spec\_religious/implementation\_1\_PD20020074\_i.shtml?level=Schools**](https://portalsrvs.det.nsw.edu.au/f5-w-68747470733a2f2f6465747777772e6465742e6e73772e6564752e6175$$/policies/curriculum/schools/spec_religious/implementation_1_PD20020074_i.shtml?level=Schools)

**Hyperlinks to DoE policies, templates and resources were active and correct at the time of publication. Hyperlinks will be updated at the time of policy update. All DoE Policies are available on the DoE Portal at:** [**www.det.nsw.edu.au**](http://www.det.nsw.edu.au)

### Forms, templates and files associated with this policy

ABHS Special Religious Education Preference Form

Certificate of exemption on Religious Grounds

**Policy status**

The current status of this policy is shown below.

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| **Title** | ABHS Special Religious Education |
| **Version control** | Version 1  All previous versions are superseded |
| **Date tabled at Executive Meeting** | Term 1, 2016 |
| **Date of Publication** | Term 1, 2016 |
| **Authorised by** | Dwayne Hopwood – Principal |
| **Audience** | Teaching Staff, SASS staff, Parents, Students, Community |
| **Publishing Mode** | ABHS Website and ABHS Intranet |
| **Translations** | This policy is in English only |
| **Status** | Active |
| **Evaluation** | Date of scheduled policy evaluation, Term 1 2018 |
| **Contact** | We always value your feedback. Please direct any comments about this policy in writing to the school email account citing your name and contact details.  [Ashfieldbo-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:Ashfieldbo-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au) |

**END OF POLICY**