

Australian Sikh Association Ltd

Special Religious Education Policy and Procedures

About Special Religious Education (SRE)

Introduction

The NSW *Education Act* (1990) makes provision for a “religious persuasion” to teach “special religious education” (SRE) in government schools. The Department of Education (DoE) oversees this provision of the Act in its schools.

“Special religious education (SRE) is education in the beliefs and practices of an approved religious persuasion by authorized representatives of that persuasion.” (DoE *Religious Education Implementation Procedures* 2016)

DoE policy is that only those religious persuasions that are approved as “providers” can authorize teachers of SRE. The Australian Sikh Association (ASA) is a DoE approved SRE provider.

In order to maintain its status as a provider, The ASA must give an annual assurance to the DoE that it has proper processes in place to authorise its SRE teachers.

SRE Teachers

All schools require a professional approach to any sort of voluntary work that is undertaken in the classroom. Authorisation and Accreditation of SRE teachers is to ensure that children are being delivered relevant and educational content in a safe and age-appropriate way.

Other Volunteers/helpers

A helper is anyone who assists an SRE teacher in delivering a lesson or a seminar. A helper does not have authority to teach a lesson/seminar alone but may participate under the supervision of the SRE teacher in various aspects of the lesson/seminar (i.e. leading small groups, performing a musical item, providing technical or practical support).

Helpers are required to complete an SRE Teacher's Engagement Form, the Working With Children Check, child protection training and carry the authorisation card when on school property. Helpers are not required to complete Accreditation Training.

How to become an SRE Teacher

Every person who seeks to be a teacher of Special Religious Education, and anyone who accompanies them onto NSW Government School premises, must be authorised to do so. Authorisation is subject to the approval of your Senior Minister.

The following steps must be completed to be authorised to teach SRE:

1. Complete the [Working with Children Check](#)
2. Fill out the SRE Authorisation form
3. Complete SRE Accreditation Training
4. Update SRE data file

All authorisation information about the SRE teachers in our team is kept in the SRE data file. SRE authorisation cards are issued according to this information.

1. Authorisation

Responsibility for providing sufficient and appropriate SRE teachers rests with individual religious provider.

Every person who seeks to be a teacher of Special Religious Education, and anyone who accompanies them onto NSW Government School premises, must be 'authorised' to do so.

In order to teach special religious education which is in keeping with The Australian Sikh Association's beliefs and is good pedagogy and to provide assurance to the DoE that each teacher and helper is authorized, the Australian Sikh Association will:

- Verify all [Working With Children Check](#) which is valid for five years and keep a record of the verification as required by the legislation.
- Ensure that every SRE teacher and helper has child protection training and this remains current.
- Ensure that every SRE teacher participates in training on the department's [Code-of-Conduct](#)
- Provide training on the authorised curriculum and scope and sequence.
- Provide training in the delivery of the curriculum with sensitivity and in an age appropriate manner.
- Sign a declaration that they are not a person prohibited from undertaking child-related employment and have no criminal conviction for a crime against a minor, violence, sexual assault or providing prohibited drugs.
- Maintain records of the training of all its SRE teachers and helpers. Ensure to the best of its ability that every SRE teacher has initial and ongoing teacher training.
- Authorise both the material and the pedagogy used by its SRE teachers; and

- Provide links to its approved curricula on a relevant website.

SRE teachers, as a condition of authorisation, are obliged to teach from the curriculum authorised by their religious provider.

Where appropriate, The Australian Sikh Association will join with other providers in “combined arrangements” (*RE Implementation Procedures*) so that students receive SRE.

The Australian Sikh Association will also join with other providers to develop and improve standards and advocate for the validity and importance of SRE in our multicultural society.

The Education Director/General Secretary (delegate) of The Australian Sikh Association is the official point of contact for everything related to child protection and the *Working with Children Check*.

The Director Education (or delegate) of The Australian Sikh Association will sign the annual DoE letter of assurance regarding authorization of SRE teachers and is the official point of contact between The Australian Sikh Association and the DoE and other providers in relation to all other SRE matters.

1.1 SRE Coordinators

The role of the Australian Sikh Association SRE Coordinator is vital for the smooth running and successful operation of a Special Religious Education program at a local NSW Government School. The SRE Coordinator is appointed by the ASA Management Committee to oversee the operation of SRE on his behalf.

The role and function of the SRE Coordinator involves liaising with the school and acting as the point of communication between the school and SRE teachers.

The coordinator provides classroom observation, supervisor feedback, mentor support and assurance of adherence to the prescribed curriculum.

SRE Procedures

As a religious persuasion and a DoE approved provider of SRE, The Australian Sikh Association will take up the opportunity to educate students in its beliefs and, where practical, work in partnership with other approved providers to deliver SRE through “combined arrangements” (*RE Implementation Procedures 2016*).

2. Teacher authorisation

In order to maintain its status as a DoE approved provider, The Australian Sikh Association will follow a process for authorising all SRE teachers and helpers that involves:

- Providing trainings to all the SRE Teachers/helpers to a recognised standard
- The General Secretary of the Australian Sikh Association collecting and managing all the confidential records, in particular verifying the *Working with Children Check* and issue an SRE authorisation to teachers and helpers on behalf of The Australian Sikh Association.

2.1 Responsibilities

The Director Education (SRE Coordinator) of The Australian Sikh Association will

- Inform prospective SRE teachers or helpers of the process of becoming authorized;
- Organise basic SRE teacher training;
- Organise child protection training and reporting requirements of the school;
- Provide a letter to each school that includes the name, date of birth and contact details of approved teachers/helpers to the relevant schools.
- Assure the teachers to only use The Australian Sikh Association approved curriculum or resources;
- Retain and provide the signed *Job Description to SRE Teacher/helper*;
- Provide an adequate nametag/identity card for the SRE teacher/helper;
- Renew and keep the up to date authorisation of the SRE teacher/helper when it expires;
- Organise continuing professional development for the teachers/helpers;
- Review of SRE teaching, reporting the results of the review including the efforts to address issues identified in the review process.

2.2 Teacher training /professional development

Professional development sessions are run once a term (usually the first Saturday of the term) by resource development team. This team has ten members, including highly motivated, experienced teaching staff accredited with NSW main stream schools or language school. Resource development team meets on an average three times a term to develop resources for SRE teachers/helpers.

These teachers provide the new/existing staff with both face to face training and help/guide them through online courses. Teachers are encouraged to register for the

training online through ASA website or confirmation by emails. This process also ensure the compulsory attendance and keeping record of each individual teacher.

All our new teachers including casuals are required to receive training in

Child protection policy: *Protecting and Supporting Children and Young People Policy (2010) and procedures.* Teachers undertake the online child protection awareness training which is available from the NSW Department of Education site. Refer to link [Here](#)

Child protection awareness: An induction on child protection awareness training which presents staff roles and responsibilities in supporting students, as well as responding to and reporting suspected risk of harm concerns.

Code of Conduct awareness: The Code of Conduct clarifies the standards of behavior that is expected of all SRE teachers in the performance of their duties. It gives guidance in areas where staff needs to make personal and ethical decisions. Refer to link [Here](#)

Teaching different levels in the classroom: The teacher induction program also covers working with children guidelines, teachers who have to teach different age groups in the same classroom or different levels of knowledge within the same age group. It provides teachers with how to effectively tailor lessons to ensure maximum and overall student benefit.

Lesson planning and execution: The training also includes classroom management principles and a thorough knowledge of the curriculum of The Australian Sikh Association. Classroom management lessons includes delivery of lessons in a fun and engaging way as well as practical scenarios to demonstrate different techniques in order to encourage and maximise student participation and learning experiences.

Teaching strategies: The training include constructive discussion forum with teachers and trainers to equip them with different strategies and techniques to ensure effective planning and facilitation of lessons. It focuses on day to day running of a class and techniques to assist teachers in gaining optimum educational results.

Behaviour management: The behaviour management strategies support teachers to understand and prepare them with the skills to manage student behaviour in the classroom. It focuses on how you can maximize learning time and ensure that students are managed in effective and constructive ways.

Duty of care: The training is provided to make the teachers/helpers aware of their duty of care, dealing with students, dealing with schools, use of materials and resources and a practical guide on how to become an effective teacher.

2.3 Ongoing training

All the SRE teachers and helpers are required to attend ongoing training in the form of workshops, before the start of each term. This training includes child protection update, responsibilities of teachers, curriculum update, classroom management and feedback from the teachers.

Australian Sikh Association makes sure that all the teachers are updated with Child Protection and Code of Conduct Policy and procedures annually as part of ongoing training. Refer to *Section 4* below for the scheduled training sessions.

2.4 Responsibility of the SRE teacher/helper

The SRE teacher must complete an *SRE Teacher Application Form*. After obtaining authorization, the SRE teacher must:

- Retain a copy of the Job Description: SRE Teacher;
- Wear the name badge and carry the authorization card signed by the authorized person of Australian Sikh Association whenever at the school premises;
- Recognise the authority of the principal or appointed executive staff member whenever they are at the school;
- Use only a The Australian Sikh Association approved curriculum or resource; and
- Undertake Continuing Professional Development (CPD) each year.

2.5 SRE in primary and high schools

In primary and high schools The Australian Sikh Association manages SRE teachers and helpers according to section 1 above.

2.6 Seminars

Where volunteers are required for a seminar style of SRE for year or stage groups, and the Australian Sikh Association is the organising denomination, the Director Education of the Australian Sikh Association must confirm that everyone in the team is authorised by an approved provider. The Director must:

- Sight evidence that all volunteers are authorised by an approved SRE provider;
- Cross-authorise in writing all volunteers;
- Authorise in writing that the topic is related to the scope and sequence of a curriculum approved by Australian Sikh Association;
- Make sure the school is provided with a list of all volunteers; and
- Confirm that every volunteer has a name badge and carries their authorisation card.

2.7 Combined arrangements

Most SRE classes to which The Australian Sikh Association provides teachers and helpers will have a mode of delivery the DoE calls a “combined arrangement.” In essence, this means DoE approved providers, like The Australian Sikh Association, combine their teachers and helpers to provide SRE classes for students of various religious persuasions using a common curriculum.

Where teachers or helpers from the Australian Sikh Association are involved in a combined arrangement, the SRE Coordinator or General Secretary (Delegate) must

- Sight evidence that all other teachers and helpers are authorised by an approved provider;
- Cross-authorise in writing every teacher and helper;
- Authorise in writing a common curriculum from amongst those approved by the Australian Sikh Association
- Keep a copy of all documentation sighted and signed;
- Make sure the school is provided with a list of all teachers at the beginning of each year;
- Ensure that the authorisation of all teachers and helpers is up-to-date;
- Confirm that every teacher and helper has a name badge and carries his or her authorisation card in school; and
- Support continuing professional development for all teachers and helpers;
- Confirm with the school what policies and procedures the teachers and helpers are required to comply with; and
- Assist all the SRE teachers and helpers to undertake any necessary training or obtain any necessary information.

3. Complaints Procedure

All approved SRE providers like The Australian Sikh Association are committed to implementing the DoE’s own *RE Implementation Procedures*. Sometimes there are local school decisions, personal behaviors and misunderstandings that negatively impact the delivery of SRE.

The foundational principles of the complaints resolution process are

- Where at all possible, issues should be handled early and managed at a local level;
- Where an individual or provider is involved, the person or religious persuasion has a right to know the allegations against him or her or them;
- The individual or provider has the right to be heard; and
- The decision makers must be free from bias.

3.1 When the Director Education/SRE coordinator of The Australian Sikh Association has an issue with the way the *RE Implementation Procedures* are interpreted or implemented by the school.

The DoE has a *Complaints Handling Policy* and a *Complaints Handling Policy Guidelines*. Normally most issues relating to SRE can be resolved without recourse to these documents. The Director Education/SRE coordinator of The Australian Sikh Association should also be familiar with the DoE's *Religious Education Policy* and the *Religious Education Implementation Procedures*.

The Australian Sikh Association should encourage teachers and helpers to follow these policies and procedures. Where an issue cannot be immediately resolved the Director Education of The Australian Sikh Association should make an appointment with the principal.

3.2 When the school has a problem with an SRE teacher or helper

In the event that the school or a parent has a concern with the delivery of SRE, The Australian Sikh Association expects someone from the school, like the school SRE Coordinator or the principal, to contact the Director Education.

The DoE has clear procedures for dealing with child protection complaints. If there is a complaint made about an SRE teacher or helper from The Australian Sikh Association in relation to child protection, the Director Education must be notified immediately.

The nature of any concern or complaint should be documented and include the date and time and name of the person who makes contact from the school.

The General Secretary must talk with the SRE teacher(s) involved and seek some resolution of the issue at the core of the complaint based on the Department of Education Religious Education *Implementation Procedures* and The Australian Sikh Association's *SRE Policy and Procedures*.

When the complaint is resolved, the SRE Coordinator of The Australian Sikh Association should talk face-to-face with the principal of the school so that there is clear communication and an agreed resolution of the complaint.

4. Training/professional development schedule

Period	Focus Area
Jan/Feb Term 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Development of routines in classroom ➤ How to target all four components (reading, writing, listening, speaking) in each lesson ➤ Use of technology for learning in classrooms ➤ Online teaching resources : sample of interactive resources to be used in class ➤ Sharing Syllabus Outcomes developed by Teachers resource team for 0-6 and lesson planning for Term 1 ➤ Parent representatives sharing their views/concerns ➤ Encourage teachers to attend professional development sessions organised by various educational institutions such as Universities or TAFE.
Special training session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Child protection and classroom management ➤ Code of conduct awareness session ➤ Resources to improve the use and quality of Punjabi vocabulary ➤ Teachers to share experiences and resources from the internal and external professional development sessions ➤ Updates from SRE Coordinator
April/May Term 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lesson planning for Term 2 2018 ➤ Hand on activities for engaging students ➤ Movement of students levelling update : How can we move students to different levels/group – assessing their capabilities/understanding ➤ Ideas for using technology in class: Resources team ➤ Routines in classroom and Home work ➤ Teacher share experience and assist each other in developing better teaching strategies. ➤ Regular updates from SRE coordinator
July/August Term 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lesson Planning for Term 3 ➤ Use of various resources such as conversation cards to start Punjabi conversation in class ➤ Use of interactive word games and other online resources ➤ Use of HSC Punjabi past papers in class: Resource team ➤ How to increase the use and quality of Punjabi vocabulary : Experienced teacher ➤ Regular updates from SRE coordinator
October Term 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lesson plan for Term 4 ➤ Prepare for assessing the children's ability and making arrangements for them to move or join different level/group. ➤ Teachers share experience and innovative ideas for future improvement in teaching and development of children knowledge and awareness. ➤ Supervisor feedback, mentor support and classroom observation: Updates by SRE coordinator:
Additional sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Workshop to be conducted by Education officer or representative from community language schools ➤ Seminars on various topics (external/internal speakers) ➤ Regular updates from SRE coordinator

