



# Catholic Diocese of Wagga Wagga

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## Special Religious Education CODE OF CONDUCT

Faith Respect Responsibility Fairness Impartiality Integrity Honesty Mission

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## Statement of Ethics

Ethical principles upon which this Code is based will apply to educators working within or collaborating with the Catholic Church. These are:

### Principle 1: Commitment to the students

SRE Teachers and Helpers believe that children and young people have worth and dignity. SRE Teachers and Helpers have a special responsibility to encourage each student to achieve maximum potential. They can work to stimulate the spirit of enquiry, acquisition of knowledge and understanding, the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals and values and a sound relationship with God, the Church and community. This forms part of the lifelong faith journey of children and young people.

### Principle 2: Commitment to parents/carers, family members

Parents are the primary and principal educators of their children in the faith, prayer and virtues. The family home is where children and young people begin to be formed in the Catholic faith. Special Religious Education is where students attend classes of their families' choice to complement and support the ongoing education and formation begun in the home. As SRE Teachers and Helpers, we are called to assist these families in fulfilling their responsibility for the spiritual formation and religious education of their children.

### Principle 3: Commitment to the community

SRE Teachers and Helpers recognise the contribution of public schools in educating students in the community. Students who attend NSW public schools are an integral part of the parish; as such SRE Teachers and Helpers have a vital role to play in preparing future citizens, parishioners, civic and Church leaders.

### Principle 4: Commitment to sound educational practice

SRE Teachers and Helpers strive for excellence with our students for their own good, and the good of our Church, society, nation and world. SRE Teachers and Helpers strive to create a Christian classroom environment which promotes sound moral values based upon the teachings of Jesus as transmitted by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.



## 1. Introduction

The Special Religious Education (SRE) Code of Conduct is based on Gospel Values as taught by the Catholic Church. These values are more specifically articulated in the Code of Canon Law (CIC 1983) and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (CCEO 1990) according to which the Catholic Church operates both nationally and internationally.

The Special Religious Education (SRE) Code of Conduct draws on “Integrity in the Service of the Church” – a resource document of principles and standards for lay workers in the Catholic Church in Australia”. © *The National Committee for Professional Standards (NCPS), 2011* - A committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops and the Leaders of Religious Institutes in Australia.

The Code also draws on the following State and Federal laws as well as Diocese of Wagga Wagga standards:

*The NSW Department of Education (DoE) Code of Conduct* © 1 July 2014 (updated Dec 2016)

*Towards Healing* [2000] and *Integrity in Ministry* [June 2004].

*Child Protection Code of Professional Standards for Catholic Schools, CCER and CEO Sydney* amended by Catholic Conference of Religious Educators in State Schools (CCRESS) 2005.

*Guidelines for Professional Conduct in the Protection of Children and Young People, NSW Catholic Systemic Schools*, August 2013

*Code of Professional Conduct for Catholic SRE Employees* Diocese of Wagga Wagga.

### Related documents:

*Guidelines for Professional Conduct in the Protection of Children and Young People, Diocese of Wagga Wagga August 2016*

*ICT Acceptable Use Policy* Diocese of Wagga Wagga

*Managing Workplace Relations Policy (Harassment)* Diocese of Wagga Wagga 2002

*Ombudsman’s Act* 1974

*Anti-Discrimination Act* 1977

*Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act* 1998

*Work, Health & Safety Act* 2011

*Religious Education Implementation Procedures 2016* NSW DoE

Codes of Conduct from Archdiocese of Sydney, Dioceses of Bathurst, Broken Bay, Maitland-Newcastle, Parramatta and Wollongong



## 2. The Purpose of the SRE Code of Conduct

“...A code of conduct is not intended to restrict or stifle the conduct of those professionals to whom it applies. Rather, it is a set of behavioural standards to ensure that professionals themselves preserve their own dignity and respect the human dignity of all to whom they relate in the exercise of their profession...” (Foreword, ‘Integrity in Ministry’ June 2004).

This Code of Conduct (Code) underpins the work of all those involved in the Ministry of Special Religious Education in NSW public schools that form part of the SRE Provider. The terms Special Religious Education (SRE) and SRE Teacher, SRE Helper and SRE Volunteer will be used throughout this document referring to Catechesis and Catechist. The Catholic SRE Provider will be referred to as the Diocese.

The aim of the Code is to guide the SRE volunteer to a better understanding of standards of behaviour which are currently expected by society in general, the DoE and the Diocese in particular. This Code does not attempt to provide a complete list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours but rather a broad framework to assist with ministry in SRE.

The Code also outlines how we can all take responsibility for our own conduct and work together with others, so the work we do is

“...a mission that transforms the ordinary values of the world. It grows slowly, from small beginnings, often unnoticed but always carried forward by the powerful Spirit of God. Its foundation is love: ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with your entire mind’; ‘You must love your neighbour as yourself.’ In fact, to live the reign of God is a commitment to a way of love. ‘I give you a new commandment; love one another; you must love one another just as I have loved you. It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognise you as my disciples.’ (Integrity in Ministry pg viii).

Adhering to the Code will help SRE volunteers to understand what will be appropriate conduct for their work in child-related ministry and enable them to assist schools in achieving a safe and supportive environment for students, SRE volunteers and the broader community of the school. The SRE Code of Conduct applies to all people involved in the ministry of Special Religious Education.

## 3. Who has to comply with the SRE Code of Conduct?

The SRE Code of Conduct applies to all employees, volunteers, clergy, religious and lay people working on behalf of the Diocese. There is an expectation that all people involved in SRE Ministry will comply.

SRE Teachers and Helpers are to endorse the principles of current Child Protection Law and follow the DoE Religious Education Implementation Procedures (updated October 2016) as an essential responsibility. The SRE Code of Conduct will assist SRE Teachers and Helpers in understanding and fulfilling their legal and other responsibilities in the ministry.



#### 4. What does the Diocese expect of SRE Teachers and Helpers?

SRE volunteers are required to be aware of all legislation, policies, procedures and work related to the role. The most relevant of these will be made available through induction and training. SRE volunteers are required to undertake Basic Accreditation training and participate in mandatory ongoing training in the areas of classroom management and child protection issues. SRE volunteers are also strongly encouraged to attend other training and formation opportunities.

As a representative of the Catholic faith, SRE Teachers/Helpers are expected to be caring and compassionate towards the students in their class. In doing so they must set appropriate boundaries since they are in a position of authority and have a duty of care for students.

SRE Teachers/Helpers must only teach the approved authorised curriculum and use age-appropriate resources for SRE lessons.

SRE Teachers/Helpers are expected to work cooperatively and respectfully with relevant Church and School personnel.

#### 5. What happens if an SRE Volunteer breaches the Code of Conduct?

The Code touches on many significant issues relating to people working with children and young people. SRE Teachers and Helpers are representatives of the Bishop and Priests who authorise them. Special Religious Education Teachers or Helpers who do not comply with the Code of Conduct could be asked and expected to withdraw from SRE and other child-related ministries.

#### 6. Reporting concerns about employee conduct

The breach in Code of Conduct may initially be identified by a student, parent/carer, classroom teacher, SRE Coordinator or school staff who would then refer the matter to the Diocesan CCD Coordinator. All allegations against a SRE Teacher or Helper must be referred to the DoE Principal and the Diocesan CCD Coordinator. The course of action to be taken will be determined by the Diocesan CCD Coordinator in consultation with the Parish Priest and other relevant Diocesan teams.



## 7. Respect for others

It is not only what we do and say but the way we do and say it that demonstrates our commitment to the Gospel message and to creating a safe and friendly environment in which the children and young people in our care can grow and develop.

**Behaviour, attitudes and language** are an integral part of the SRE lesson. SRE Teachers and Helpers must not unjustly discriminate against or harass colleagues, students or members of the public on a number of grounds including sex, marital status, pregnancy, age, race, religion, culture, ethnic or national origin, physical or intellectual impairment or political persuasion. Such harassment or discrimination may constitute an offence under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*.

**Students need to be treated with respect and care** even when their behaviour may be difficult or challenging. There is no place for sarcasm, derogatory remarks, offensive comments or any conduct that may result in emotional distress or psychological harm to a child. Such behaviours include targeted and ongoing criticism, belittling, teasing, excessive or unreasonable demands, hostility, verbal abuse, threatening, rejection, scapegoating and using inappropriate locations or social isolation.

**Cultural awareness:** SRE Teachers and Helpers need to be sensitive to cultures and traditions that are different from their own. They should not make statements, or behave in a way that demonstrates ridicule towards other denominations, religions or cultures.

**School environment:** Every school has a Discipline and Welfare Policy. SRE Teachers and Helpers should obtain a copy of the policy for the schools in which they work and adhere to the policy, which is usually available on the school website.

SRE Teachers and Helpers are to promote an atmosphere of respect for the classroom teacher and school personnel by their language and behaviour. All students are to be treated fairly. An interaction with a student which is unjustly discriminatory, demeaning or belittling is not acceptable and constitutes a breach of the Code.

## 8. Duty of Care

Duty of care is the legal obligation to provide reasonable care and not harm others. The care of children and young people begins with the attitude of SRE Teachers and Helpers to a variety of issues which can impact on those in our care. Duty of care includes but is not limited to:

- Adequate supervision of SRE classes
- Ensuring a safe physical environment which is free from obstacles and obstructions
- Restricting students from activities in which they or another person may be injured
- Reporting any bullying or harmful behaviour to school authorities
- Seeking assistance from trained school personnel should a medical need for a student arise
- Considering one's own safety as well as that of others
- Remembering that safety relates to both physical and psychological wellbeing of individuals



## 9. Responsibilities

SRE Teachers / Helpers have a responsibility to:

- Comply with the Diocese of Wagga Wagga's SRE Authorisation Procedure
- Apply for a Working with Children Check (WwCC) clearance number
- Inform the Diocesan CCD Coordinator of your clearance number for verification
- Undertake induction, Child Protection and other relevant training
- Not do or say anything that is contrary to the teachings and values of the Catholic Church
- Become familiar with Child Protection laws and reporting procedures
- Report any concern of risk of significant harm to students directly to the Principal
- Report any situation of reportable conduct to the Principal
- Comply with all reasonable instructions from the Parish Priest/Parish Administrator, the Parish SRE Coordinator and Diocesan CCD Coordinator
- Comply with all reasonable instructions from the school principal, delegate or any supervising teacher
- Wear a lanyard containing name tag and Authorisation Card when attending schools
- Carry photo ID (e.g. driver's licence) and be prepared to present it upon the request of the school when on school property for the purpose of SRE
- Regularly and punctually attend SRE classes
- Notify schools in a timely manner if unable to attend a lesson
- Always use the authorised SRE curriculum(s) of the Diocese
- Prepare lessons according to authorised curriculum materials
- Not use any materials and internet resources outside of the approved curriculum without prior approval of the Diocese.
- Use language, words and behaviours that are not threatening
- Dress modestly and appropriately for SRE classes
- Not let personal feelings adversely affect SRE interactions with students
- Not investigate allegations of misconduct or abuse
- Become familiar with related laws and policies over time
- Become familiar with relevant individual DoE school policies over time, especially those pertaining to learning, safety, privacy, discipline and welfare
- Become aware of the NSW Department of Education [Code of Conduct](https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library) which includes the [Social Media Policy](https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library). (<https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library>)

## 10. Behaviour Management

SRE volunteers are to practice positive reinforcement and respect in all interactions with the students. They should be aware of and comply with all the applicable school policies and procedures, especially the Discipline and Welfare policy. These documents may be obtained from the principal of each school, or his/her delegate.

Mandatory ongoing training in Classroom Management is provided by the Diocese in accordance with DoE expectation of best practice.





## 11. Unacceptable (Prohibited) Behaviour Management

SRE Teachers and Helpers under no circumstance are to:

- Use physical discipline or practice behaviours which humiliate, belittle or frighten students
- Use an object, such as a ruler, to gain a student's attention
- Hold or restrain a student other than to prevent an injury or harm to another
- Intimidate students by standing over them, making them feel alienated, ashamed, guilty or engaging in discriminating behaviour or disrespectful behaviour

Corporal punishment is prohibited by law. Corporal punishment involves the application of physical force to punish or correct a student. One is permitted physical contact that is reasonable and necessary for the protection of any person.

## 12. Appropriate Relationships between SRE Teachers, SRE Helpers and Students

All students have a right to a safe physical and emotional environment. As a diocesan employee SRE volunteers are to promote the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people. They must actively seek to prevent harm to children and young people and to support those who have been harmed.

All SRE Teachers and Helpers are required to understand and observe current Child Protection Policies and attend training in Child Protection. If an SRE volunteer becomes concerned about a child or young person's well-being it is important to report/speak with the school principal or delegate.

SRE Teachers and Helpers must not engage in improper conduct that could lead to Reportable Conduct. SRE Teachers and Helpers must not:

- Impose inappropriate physical, verbal or psychological punishment
- Have an inappropriate relationship with any student
- Give gifts of a personal nature that encourages the student to think they have a special relationship with the SRE Teacher or Helper
- Expose a student to material that contains messages and themes that are violent or otherwise inappropriate given the student's age and curriculum experience
- Invite student(s) to their home or hold conversations of an intimate nature with students
- Use sexual innuendo or inappropriate language and/or material with a student
- Have contact with a student through social media, letters, phone etcetera



### 13. Being alone with students

SRE volunteers must avoid situations where they are alone with a student. If such a situation appears to be arising the child must be escorted by the SRE volunteers to the presence of a second adult.

SRE volunteers are reminded to become familiar with Diocesan Child Protection policies and related laws:

- The law prohibiting sexual or inappropriate relations with a person under the age of consent (16 years), Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, Crimes Act 1900
- The law prohibiting any sexual or inappropriate relations between a volunteer (employee) and student under the age of 18 (NSW Ombudsman 1974)
- The law prohibiting child pornography (NSW Ombudsman Act 1974)
- Privacy laws
- Provision of prohibited drugs
- An act of violence towards another person
- Any offence against a minor person

### 14. Relationships with students and families outside school hours

A healthy student/teacher relationship is usually confined to the school and classroom. SRE Teachers and Helpers must not give details of their email, telephone numbers or address to a child or young person.

If teaching Catholic students, the Catholic SRE Teachers and Helpers may distribute notes informing families of parish events by agreement with the school principal or their delegate.

Where there is an existing relationship with the student's family, avoiding contact with that student and their family would be impractical and undesirable. The school principal and SRE Coordinator must be notified in WRITING (not telephone call) of such existing relationship with family and confirm with the family that direct communication is condoned by parents.

### 15. Appropriate use of DVDs, film clips, internet sites, YouTube, and/or social networking sites

SRE volunteers should check for age classification when using approved electronic media in the SRE classroom. Any materials, DVDs, film clips and internet resources for the purpose of SRE, outside of the approved curriculum, must be age appropriate and cannot be used without prior approval from the Diocese SRE Coordinator.



### 16. Use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco

SRE Teachers and Helpers are to support a safe, productive and healthy workplace. Children and young people are not to be given alcohol, tobacco or prohibited substances. Students are to be encouraged in healthy living practices. SRE Teachers and Helpers must not be affected by alcohol or drugs and the use of alcohol or drugs must not put themselves or others at risk of harm. They are not to enter school premises under the influence of alcohol or prohibited drugs. Any questions about the application of the school's policy should be discussed with the school principal or his/her delegate.

### 17. Recruitment/Staffing/Resourcing of SRE

The staffing of the SRE ministry is the responsibility of each parish. The DoE expects SRE classes to be adequately staffed. The Parish Priest/Parish Administrator is the authorising person. A Parish SRE Coordinator may be appointed by the Parish Priest/Parish Administrator to assist in the management of SRE in the parish.

The resources used for SRE are the responsibility of the local parish. This is not a responsibility of the DoE. Schools may assist with writing equipment, photocopying, the use of teaching spaces and technology e.g. interactive whiteboards. SRE Teachers and Helpers are to be economical, look after resources and avoid waste.

### 18. Record keeping and protecting confidential information

A record serves an essential administration, legal and historical purpose. Records may be class rolls, emails, electronic documents, digital images, audio recordings, correspondence, files, forms, plans, drawings, notes, photographs, film or memory cards for cameras. Class rolls are for the sole purpose of SRE and are to be kept confidential.

SRE volunteers are not to take unauthorised photos of students. Photos may be permitted for the purpose of promotion, for example, for use in an article for the diocesan newspaper, but must have the written consent of parents prior to the photo being taken. SRE volunteers need to comply with the school policy regarding photos. SRE volunteers are not to keep or share electronic copies of photos taken of students at school unless specifically authorised.

A copy of the SRE Teacher Engagement Form is kept by the SRE volunteer and the Diocesan CCD Coordinator, in paper and electronic form.

SRE statistical data is collected once a year. The data reflects numbers of students in schools only and has no private information relating to students or schools.



### 19. Gifts

The reception of small gifts from a student's family by way of thanks, for example, after a presentation, is considered acceptable. The Principal and Diocesan CCD Coordinator should be informed of any gift received over the value of \$50. SRE volunteers should never seek cash gifts of any amount.

If an SRE volunteer is offered a bribe (i.e. anything given in order to persuade them to act improperly), they must refuse it, explain why it is not appropriate and immediately report the matter to the Principal or Parish Priest.

Accepting or giving a gift or bribe has the potential to compromise the SRE volunteer's position by creating a sense of obligation and undermining their impartiality. SRE volunteers must not create an impression that any person or organisation is influencing the Catholic Church or the DoE.

### 20. Leaving/retiring from SRE Teaching/Assisting

When leaving the ministry it is necessary for the SRE volunteer to advise the Parish Priest/Parish Administrator, the Diocesan CCD Coordinator and any other relevant personnel, for example, the Parish SRE Coordinator, of their intention. If possible the SRE teacher should consider a handover process to the next volunteer. All equipment, teacher's manuals and other resources that do not belong to the SRE volunteer are to be returned. Class rolls are to be destroyed or handed on to the next volunteer. The lanyard containing the SRE volunteer's identification and Authorisation Card is to be returned to the Diocesan CCD Coordinator.

### 21. Copyright and intellectual property

All resources listed in SRE Teacher's manuals have copyright approval from the authors and composers for use in SRE. It is important not to copy or sell any resources expressly purchased for SRE.

Only works of music, art or literature for which the SRE Teacher or Helper has copyright approval may be used to present an SRE lesson or assembly or during Mass.

Any or all works of music, art or literature used to present an SRE lesson or assembly or during Mass must be recorded on parish copyright records.

For more information on Copyright issues for Australian Schools and TAFE, can be found at: [www.smartcopying.edu.au](http://www.smartcopying.edu.au)

For more information about safeguarding children and vulnerable people in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga please go to: <http://safeguarding.wagga.catholic.org.au/>

For more detailed examples of appropriate conduct please download 'Guidelines for Professional Conduct in the Protection of Children and Young People' <http://safeguarding.wagga.catholic.org.au/policies.html>