



Catholic Diocese of Wagga Wagga

SRE Complaints Policy/Guidelines

These guidelines are designed to deal with issues arising within the SRE community and the Department of Education (DoE). They have been modified from the CCRESS template which was adapted from the initial work done for the Hunter Christian SRE Recommended Guidelines and its Joint Denominational framework.

Please Note:

The Diocese of Wagga Wagga (DWW) [SRE Complainant Form](#) (available from the Diocesan Website) is to be used to document actions undertaken to resolve the complaint/dispute. This form will be submitted to the Diocesan Catechist Coordinator when the issue is resolved or in Step 7 of the process.



Terms and Definitions

Complaint	Expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, or our volunteer Catechists who teach Special Religious Education (SRE) in State School's or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.
Dispute	An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.
Policy	A statement of instruction that sets out how we should fulfil our vision, mission and goals.
Procedure	A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.
Approved Providers of SRE Catholic Diocese	Church groups and/or denominations approved to provide SRE in NSW Government schools and who are listed on the Department of Education (DoE) website
Authorising Person (Approved Provider) Parish Priest	The priest, minister or pastor of a church/denomination with the responsibility for authorising teachers of SRE from their own church denomination at schools within their parish or local boundaries
Parish SRE Coordinator Parish based	A person who takes responsibility for the liaison between the local schools and the SRE community to organise and implement SRE schools
SRE community Approved providers of SRE	Approved volunteer SRE teachers, paid SRE teachers, authorising persons, CCRESS, local faith communities ICCOREIS, inter-church groups, boards and associations, publishers of approved curriculum.
School SRE Coordinator/School Principal	The person, usually a teacher, at the school who has responsibility for the liaison between the SRE teachers and the school to organise and implement SRE in that school
Diocesan CCD office	Confraternity of Christian Doctrine office coordinates and administers SRE in State Schools. The CCD is led by the Diocesan Catechist Coordinator.
Local Joint SRE committee (where applicable)	A member of the Local Joint SRE Committee is a person representing a Christian denomination who seeks to advocate for, and support SRE teachers on behalf of the denomination he/she represents in their particular region.
DoE Regional Director	A person appointed by the DoE to have oversight for the implementation of SRE in Public schools in each regional office.



CCRESS	Catholic Conference of Religious Educators in State Schools – Each diocese within NSW / ACT is a member. CCRESS has representation on the Department of Education Consultative Committee -DoECC and ICCOREIS – see below.
SRE and SEE Officer DoE	Officer responsible for implementation of SRE and SEE in Department of Education

Acronyms

SEE	Special Education in Ethics
SRE	Special Religious Education
DoE	Department of Education
CCRESS	Catholic Conference of Religious Educators in State Schools
CCD	Confraternity of Christian Doctrine
ICCOREIS	Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools



Recommended Guidelines for Support, Mediation & Resolution of Complaints/Disputes in Special Religious Education

The following guidelines are designed to deal with complaints that may arise and require intervention and/or mediation in order to achieve resolution. These guidelines offer consistency of approach and an appropriate timeline in order to achieve an outcome.

These guidelines have been developed in order to adopt a consistent, open and transparent process in the handling of issues arising in the delivery of Catholic SRE and Joint Denominational SRE.

These guidelines were developed in accordance with the following DoE policies and guidelines.

DoE Complaint Handling Policy Guidelines

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/complaints-handling-policy>

“Audience and applicability - 2.2.2 NSW DoE students, parents, care givers and community members.”

In the following paragraph the following words for SRE purposes, mean the following:

Employee – Volunteer, Catechist, SRE Teacher etc

Employer – Curriculum matter: Parish Priest,
- Child Protection matter: Diocese - CCD Office.

Complaints are dealt with in compliance with the DoE guidelines. “Anyone can make a complaint. Ideally, most complaints should be resolved informally, with the relevant employee...” (Page 4) “ ...If you feel that the issue has not been resolved or it would be inappropriate to raise it with the employee concerned, then you can make the complaint to their supervisor, manager or the principal at the site where the problem occurred (e.g. the office, school or college). If you have concerns about the local supervisor, the complaint should be made to the next supervisory level.” (Page 5)

DoE Code of Conduct

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/associated-documents/The-2014-Code-of-Conduct-approved-by-Minister-1-July-2014-updated-Dec-2016-not-tracked.pdf>



Catholic Diocese of Wagga Wagga SRE Code of Conduct

<http://www.wagga.catholic.org.au/default.aspx?d=4381699>

These Recommended Guidelines share the values of fairness, respect, integrity and responsibility as set out in the DoE Statement of Ethics and the Diocese of Wagga Wagga Code of Conduct. We share and support the stated value of acknowledging all stakeholders as partners in our work. The SRE community understands that SRE volunteers have a responsibility to “be aware of this Code and act in line with the conduct described in it”. (3.3)

DoE Religious Education Implementation Procedures

https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/curriculum/schools/spec_religious/REimplementproced.pdf

These are the departmental guidelines provided for Special Religious Education: education in the beliefs and practices of an approved religious persuasion by authorised representatives of that persuasion.

The Recommended Guidelines are designed to specify who to contact if you want to discuss a concern, problem or would like to make a complaint.

The Recommended Guidelines seek to:

- Provide a timely response to a problem
- Be consistent and uniform in dealing with issues
- Put in place steps or actions that are appropriate
- Adopt a measured approach to escalating an issue
- Respect all the stakeholders in the provision for SRE in Government schools

It is very important to note that the basis for initiating these proposed guidelines will be in a situation where it can be reasonably demonstrated that the implementation of SRE at a given school has contravened the Department of Education policy and implementation procedures.



Guidelines for dealing with an SRE issue

- Make every effort to deal with the issue locally before taking it further. The Parish SRE Coordinator and the Diocesan Catechist Coordinator should be informed of any issues arising in the provision of SRE.
- Document and diarise actions taken.
- Use a template for reporting (see appendix).
- Refer all initial issues to the Parish SRE Coordinator or to the Parish Priest if there is no Parish SRE Coordinator.
- School SRE Coordinator/School Principal to assist and support the process.
- Keep everyone apprised of the progress made.
- Set a time frame for resolution of the issue.

Order of contact:

Parish/CCD	School
SRE Volunteer / Teacher/Helper	School Teacher
Parish SRE Coordinator	School SRE Coordinator
Authorising Person (Parish Priest)	School Principal
CCD office (Diocesan Catechist Coordinator)	DoE Regional Director
CCRESS	SRE and SEE Officer

With consideration of privacy issues and proper process, it is important to encourage a model of open discussion of issues, encouraging team resolution with the aim to avoid issues escalating unnecessarily.

As stated in the DoE complaint guidelines:

- All minor complaint and disputes should be resolved promptly and without using formal procedures.
- Whenever possible, informal resolution should be attempted first in all matters assessed as less serious.
- The preferred method of resolving complaints/issues is at a local level.



STEP by STEP approach

Step	Person/Persons	Action
1	Authorised SRE Teacher and School Teacher	Make an informal approach about an issue to the classroom teacher
2	SRE teacher and Parish SRE Coordinator	Identify the issue(s) and seek advice from the Parish SRE Coordinator. Diarise and document it. Start filling in SRE Complainant Form (download from the Diocesan Website). This form will be given to the Diocesan Catechist Coordinator when issue is resolved or in Step 7. Inform the Diocesan Catechist Coordinator
3	SRE Teacher, Parish SRE Coordinator and Authorising person (Parish Priest)	Discuss and decide on a plan of further action which includes documentation
4	Parish SRE Coordinator and School SRE Coordinator/Representative	Arrange a meeting to discuss the issue in relation to DoE guidelines
5	Parish SRE Coordinator	Document the discussion in the meeting and any outcomes. Identify if further action is required. Advise Authorising person (Parish Priest) and Diocesan Catechist Coordinator
6	Parish SRE Coordinator, Parish Priest and Principal (Diocesan Catechist Coordinator)	If unresolved arrange for a meeting with the Authorising person to present issues and clarify the DoE guidelines. This meeting must be documented. Inform the Diocesan Catechist Coordinator
7	CCD- Diocesan Catechist Coordinator	If issue unresolved, CCD- Diocesan Catechist Coordinator will contact the DoE regional director representative. The Parish SRE Coordinator provides documentation and diary notes, including the completed SRE Complainants Form.
8	CCD- Diocesan Catechist Coordinator and CCRESS - Executive	CCD will present the issue to the CCRESS Executive with a request to follow up with the DoE. CCD to provide documentation.
9	CCRESS and DoE (Executive and SRE/SEE Officer)	CCRESS Executive presents the issue to the DoE and reports back.



- Once the case has been escalated to Step 4 it will be important to keep all of the stakeholders apprised of the progress of the situation.
- All concerns and issues should be addressed and expedited in a timely fashion
- Catholic SRE concerns and issues are handled by the Catholic provider.
- Concerns and issues relating to Joint SRE need also to be addressed with the relevant local Joint SRE committee or participating Churches.
- Any complaints or disputes about how matters are handled by employees or volunteers of SRE in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga may also be referred to the Diocese Professional Standards and Safeguarding Officer (Child Protection Manager) at McAlroy House.

Examples of issues that might be dealt with by this policy

Concerns from the SRE provider's perspective

- Schools consistently using SRE time to schedule extracurricular activities
- Changing the time or day of SRE without consultation and negotiation
- The school offering SEE to children enrolled in SRE
- A SRE Board or Association acting inappropriately
- Concern about a fellow SRE volunteer/catechist
- Provision of suitable space for SRE classes

Concerns from the parent or school perspective

- A complaint about a SRE teacher e.g. Classroom management, Child Protection, Safeguarding (refer to Catholic Diocese of Wagga Wagga Code of Conduct in the protection of children and young people.)
- Concern over material which is being taught in the classroom i.e. the pedagogy and curriculum – the appropriate use of curriculum.

Accountability and learning

- We will ensure that complaints are recorded in a systematic way so that information can be easily retrieved for reporting and analysis.
- We will continually monitor our complaints procedure to ensure its effectiveness in responding to and resolving complaints and identify and correct deficiencies in its operation.
- We are committed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of our complaints policy guidelines.

