

Special Religious Education (SRE)

CHILD PROTECTION AND CODE OF CONDUCT INTRODUCTORY TRAINING

As a provider of SRE the Diocese of Wagga Wagga has an agreement with the NSW Department of Education (DoE) to provide SRE volunteers with initial and ongoing training in the areas of Child Protection Issues and Classroom Management.

As part of our authorisation process you are asked to read through the following material carefully and complete a Response Sheet. Your Response Sheet is to be posted with your Teacher Engagement Form to the Diocesan Catechist Coordinator:

Barbara Chigwidden
PO Box 473
Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

For advise and reporting of Child Protection matters:

Catholic Diocese of Wagga Wagga Safeguarding Officer
safeguarding@wagga.catholic.org.au
Ph: 02 69370079

WHY YOU NEED TO KNOW THIS

As a volunteer for the diocese going into NSW public schools we have a duty to inform you about procedures in place regarding Child Protection.

- Someone may disclose information to you that needs to be reported
- You may witness some inappropriate behaviour that needs to be reported
- By being fully informed, you can ensure you maintain the correct behavior and boundaries in your professional conduct.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION- current legislation

Common Law

- Duty of Care

Legislation

- *Children's Guardian Act 2019 (The Act)*
- *Crimes Act 1900*
- *Child Protection (Working with Children Check) Act 2012*

MANDATORY REPORTING:

Mandatory reporting is the legislative requirement for selected classes of people to report suspected child abuse and neglect to government authorities.

In NSW, mandatory reporting is regulated by the Care Act. Legislative grounds for intervention in NSW cover young people up to 18 years of age, but it is not mandatory to report suspicions of risk of harm in relation to young people aged 16 and 17 years. It is mandatory to report suspicions of risk of harm in relation to children under the age of 16 years.

From 1 March 2020, amendments to the Care Act commenced and expand the mandatory reporter group to include Clergy, agency and parish workers (paid and unpaid) in child related roles.

WHO ARE MANDATORY REPORTERS IN NSW?

In NSW mandatory reporting obligations apply to persons who deliver the following services wholly or partly to children as part of their professional work or other paid employment and those in management positions in organisations that deliver those services:

- Health Care
- Welfare (psychologists, social workers)
- Education (teachers, counsellors)
- Disability Services
- Children's Services
- Residential Services
- Law Enforcement
- **Persons in religious ministry or persons providing religion-based activities to children**
- Registered psychologists

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

If you have any concerns about a child, a child discloses information to you, or if you witness inappropriate behaviour towards a child or children:

Step One:

Talk to the Principal or Assistant Principal

Step Two:

In the case of a disclosure- take detailed notes of the conversation (include date, name/s, nature of the allegations etc. verbatim if possible, **not in front of the child**) and pass the notes on to the Principal or Assistant Principal.

In the case of other concerns- take detailed notes and pass on to the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Step Three:

Notify the Diocese Safeguarding Officer (safeguarding@wagga.catholic.org.au or ph **02 6937 0079**) and Diocesan CCD Coordinator that you have reported concerns to the Principal/Assistant Principal.

Step Four:

DO NOT discuss this matter with anyone, apart from the nominated contact person. This matter must be kept highly confidential.

You may find yourself in the situation where a child discloses information around sexual abuse, physical or emotional abuse, neglect or injury. In this situation it is important to receive the information from the child without passing any form of judgement regarding the information. There are people who are trained to investigate allegations, your role at this time is to listen and receive what the child chooses to disclose. Please read the following carefully:

<p>MANAGING A DISCLOSURE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be there for that child in that moment • Listen • Remain calm • Be reassuring • Use appropriate language for child's age • Accept their story • Be honest- it is important not to make promises you can't keep • Comfort • Avoid expressing doubt or judgement • Accepting and not judging 	<p>MESSAGES TO CONVEY TO THE CHILD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will listen to you • It is the right thing to tell me • It is not your fault • You are not alone • What was done was wrong <p>WHAT NOT TO DO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't start an investigation • Don't ask questions of the child who is disclosing- you have a passive role of listening and receiving the information • Don't play 'rescuer' • Don't try to shut the child down
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Managing a disclosure can be summarised by remembering the Three Rs:

- Reassure the child
- Record the information you receive
- Report to the appropriate authority- DoE Principal and notify the Diocese Safeguarding Officer and Diocesan CCD Coordinator

ALLEGATIONS

It is the SRE teacher's responsibility to ensure the children are safe and happy during their lessons. If the SRE teacher should become aware of any serious personal problems (e.g. child abuse, neglect, injury) they should discuss the matter in strict confidence with the School Principal and notify the Diocese Safeguarding Officer & Diocesan CCD Coordinator, they are **NOT** to discuss it with their Parish SRE Coordinator or anybody else.

Where an allegation or complaint is made that an SRE employee has behaved inappropriately towards a child it must be reported to the School Principal, Diocese Safeguarding Officer and the Diocesan CCD Coordinator.

An investigation into the complaint will be undertaken.

The circumstances of the case will determine the appropriate authority to conduct the investigation.

For example, if a child tells you that another SRE teacher or a member of school staff has behaved inappropriately you are required to report that concern to the principal and notify the Diocese Safeguarding Officer and Diocesan CCD Coordinator. It is not up to the SRE volunteer to determine if the allegation or complaint is true or false.

Be aware that failing to report in some circumstances is a criminal offence. If unsure about any child abuse concern always seek advice from the Diocese Safeguarding Officer.

Other examples of reportable conduct include:

- Targeting a child for special attention and gifts, etc.
- Inappropriate or suggestive comments or jokes directed at a child
- Providing alcohol or drugs to children
- Inappropriate physical contact

WHAT IF AN ALLEGATION IS MADE AGAINST ME?

- Diocesan management will respond promptly and confidentially if an allegation is made about an employee.
- Allegations are resolved through a fair, thorough, transparent and accountable process.
- A fair process involves listening to 'both sides of the story' and giving all involved opportunities to be heard.
- No decision is made until the person about whom the allegation is made, has responded.

AVOIDING ALLEGATIONS

SRE teachers need to be particularly careful to ensure that their own behaviour at all times is moral and exemplary. To minimize the chance of allegations being made against an SRE teacher for sexual impropriety or another form of unacceptable behaviour, the teacher should:

- Avoid physical contact with children
- Always make sure that they are in the view of others when talking with only one or two children and avoid relatively secluded places.
- Distinguish between the normal boundaries of teacher/pupil relationships and those that move beyond those boundaries. Ensure that levels of affection remain within normal boundaries.

Special Religious Education Handbook, Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (NSW) Inc. (ICCOREIS NSW) January 2011

- Abide by the Code of Conduct Policy of the Diocese of Wagga Wagga in the Protection of Children and Young People,

MAINTAINING PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES AND REDUCING THE RISK OF ALLEGATION

- Demonstrate professional relationships with children and young people that cannot be misinterpreted as personal or inappropriate (always conduct yourself professionally)
- Remain within the responsibilities of your role
- Know and follow the procedures relevant to your school
- Be familiar with school policies (welfare/discipline etc.)
- Be familiar with Diocesan policies and procedures- including the SRE Code of Conduct (download from the Diocesan website <http://www.wagga.catholic.org.au/Education-Catechesis/SRE-Catechesis.aspx>)
- Be familiar with the 'CREATING A SAFE CHILD FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT- Acceptable & Unacceptable Conduct' (pgs. 6-7 of this document) and specifically the Diocese of Wagga Wagga Code of Conduct.

Examples of school procedures to be familiar with

- Movement from assembly, playground to the classroom
- How students enter the classroom

- How students address teachers at your school
- How students answer questions
- Leaving the room to go to the toilet (another student should accompany the student leaving the room)
- School discipline policy & Emergency procedures (e.g. evacuation and lockdown)

DUTY OF CARE

- Ensure no child or young person is exposed to foreseeable risk of harm
- Take action to minimize risk (if a child is misusing scissors intervene, if a child is standing on table take action)
- Supervision
- Follow policies and procedures regarding child welfare and wellbeing including serious incidents and reporting risk of significant harm

WHAT IF A CHILD HAS AN ACCIDENT OR SOME INCIDENT HAPPENS DURING CLASS?

Depending on the severity of the incident the classroom teacher or in the case of something more serious the school Principal will need to be notified. Schools have an incident report log that may need to be filled in depending on what has happened. By reporting the incident to the school personnel they will guide you in what needs to be done.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

SRE volunteers are reminded that physical contact is to be avoided. However, there are occasions when physical contact may be necessary, for example in the case of a child's safety.

'CREATING A SAFE CHILD FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT: Acceptable and Unacceptable Conduct'

Please read through pages 6-7 carefully. You will notice five main areas for conduct- Student Management, Physical Contact, Communication, Location and Professional Boundaries.

DIOCESE OF WAGGA WAGGA SRE CODE OF CONDUCT

It is also important to be familiar with the Diocesan SRE Code of Conduct. This can be downloaded from the Diocesan Website: <http://www.wagga.catholic.org.au/Education-Catechesis/SRE-Catechesis.aspx>

Please read through the Diocese of Wagga Wagga SRE Code of Conduct and sign the declaration on the Response Sheet.

DIOCESE OF WAGGA WAGGA SRE COMPLAINTS POLICY





Also available on the Diocesan Website is the SRE Complaints Policy- this document outlines the procedures in place to manage SRE concerns around issues such as curriculum, schools consistently using SRE time for extracurricular activities, changing SRE times without consultation and negotiation, concerns about a SRE teacher's classroom management skills or delivery of the curriculum etc. Concerns may come from various people such as school staff, SRE volunteers or parents.

The guidelines in the SRE Complaints Policy **DO NOT** apply to Child Protection issues. For Child Protection issues follow the steps outlined on page 2 of this document.

Training Information Acknowledgements:

- CCRESS online training material
- Broken Bay Diocese
- Lismore Diocese

CREATING A SAFE CHILD FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT
Acceptable & Unacceptable Conduct

	Student Management	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DO use non-confrontational behaviour management and language ▪ DO seek support from colleagues and CCD Coordinators if issues emerge with a student ▪ DO use individual behaviour management plans in consultation with the class teacher ▪ DO practice risk assessment and risk management strategies 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DON'T use confrontational behaviour management styles, threatening comments or gestures. ▪ DON'T leave a student inadequately supervised ▪ DON'T inappropriately isolate a student, e.g. lock in a cupboard, room or other confined space ▪ DON'T allow a negative attitude to develop towards a particular student ~ seek advice
	Physical Contact	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DO use approved procedures for managing difficult behaviour ▪ DO use non-physical intervention strategies first to de-escalate situations ▪ DO report and document incidents of physical restraint/contact ▪ DO use appropriate contact to protect student from imminent danger to self or others ▪ DO provide medical attention in accordance with the School's First Aid and Medication policies (there will be a designated school employee) ▪ It is OK to use non-intrusive touch to congratulate a child or young person ▪ It is OK to use a non-intrusive gesture that is age appropriate to comfort a child 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DON'T use physical contact to force compliance ▪ DON'T confiscate articles, by grabbing or pulling from a student ▪ DON'T use an intimidating or over-bearing physical stance or language ▪ DON'T confine a child to a locked room or use any other form of isolation ▪ DON'T use physical touch to demonstrate an action without warning or being given permission ▪ DON'T use unnecessary or unwarranted displays of physical affection



Communication



- **DO** use appropriate and affirming language and gestures with students
- **DO** use electronic media as per the school's policy
- **DO** report any concerns to the DoE Principal or Assistant Principal
- **DO** report to the Diocesan CCD Coordinator or Diocesan Safeguarding Officer any concerns or disclosures from a child in the parish atrium

- **DON'T** use derogatory, sarcastic or belittling comments
- **DON'T** use inappropriate humour or sexual innuendo
- **DON'T** have conversations of a sexual nature or condone sexual jokes, gestures by others
- **DON'T** show sexually inappropriate images
- **DON'T** discuss your own, colleagues or any other person's sensitive or personal information with a student
- **DON'T** ask students for personal information such as contact details
- **DON'T** engage in personal correspondence, e.g.: letter, email, phone, SMS text, Facebook or other social networking sites with students



Location



- **DO** be sensitive regarding being alone with a student, e.g. leave the door open
- **DO** ensure that a full risk assessment has been conducted re. activities / excursions
- **DO** act in accordance with policies or school/diocesan expectations
- **DO** minimize opportunities for a child /young person to be alone with you

- **DON'T** invite a child/young person to your home or visit their home except in an emergency or as discussed with management
- **DON'T** drive a child/young person to or from school or excursions
- **DON'T** have social contact with a child/young person outside of normal duties



Professional Boundaries



- **DO** be pastoral, but within your role and ensure that all your actions are open and transparent
- **DO** demonstrate professional relationships with students that cannot be misinterpreted as overly personal, intimate or inequitable
- **DO** seek advice from your CCD Coordinator if 'grey' areas or ethical issues arise
- **DO** follow procedures regarding reporting 'risk of significant harm' or concerns of inappropriate conduct by catechists to the DoE Principal and the Diocese Safeguarding Officer and Diocesan Coordinator

- **DON'T** engage in a sexual relationship with any student nor inappropriately pursue relationships with former students
- **DON'T** facilitate student access to pornographic or other unsuitable materials
- **DON'T** provide drugs or alcohol to students
- **DON'T** give personal gifts or provide special favours to individual students including spending 'special time'
- **DON'T** engage in private tuition of students outside of SRE classroom.

NAME: _____

PARISH: _____

SRE CHILD PROTECTION AND CODE OF CONDUCT INTRODUCTORY TRAINING RESPONSE SHEET

Please read through the SRE Child Protection Introductory Reading Material and answer the following:

Please answer the following True or False (T/F)

1. SRE Teachers and Helpers are Mandatory Reporters _____
2. If a child discloses abuse to me I should ask questions to get more information for when I report _____
3. If I observe a SRE teacher behaving inappropriately towards a child, I should report it to the principal or assistant principal and the Diocesan CCD coordinator _____
4. If I am concerned about a child, I should tell my parish coordinator _____

Circle answer: If a child discloses abuse to me or I am concerned that a child is at risk of significant harm I should:

- a) Tell the classroom teacher
- b) Report to the parish priest and notify the Diocesan CCD coordinator
- c) Report to the Principal or Assistant Principal and notify the Diocese Safeguarding Officer and Diocesan CCD Coordinator. Do not discuss the matter with anyone else
- d) Keep what the child has told me in confidence or keep my concerns to myself
- e) Report to the Principal or Assistant Principal and notify the Parish SRE Coordinator and Diocesan CCD Coordinator

List three ways to reduce the risk of an allegation being made against you:

SCENARIO 1

Daniel is 7 years of age and has ADHD. He is constantly jumping up and down out of his chair and is often in trouble. On this occasion, Daniel was wrestling with another child on the mat. He lost his balance and fell towards the first floor window. The volunteer leapt up and grabbed Daniel by the shirt collar and pulled him backward away from the window. Daniel had a red mark around his neck and was angry at the volunteer.

Has the volunteer in this scenario acted appropriately or inappropriately? Explain.

Would any follow up need to happen?

SCENARIO 2

You are teaching another class at short notice as the regular catechist is on holiday. One of the students approaches you after class and tells you how much they liked having you as a teacher because the other teacher yells at the class. According to the student the other teacher even hit one of the girls with a book to make her stop talking during class.

What actions would you take in connection with the allegation?

Please tick which policy/guidelines apply for the following:

Concern	SRE Complaints Policy	SRE Child Protection Policy
You observe significant bruising on a child who is reluctant to tell you what happened		
The school has decided to change the SRE class time without consulting the SRE volunteers		
A parent has concerns about what a child learnt in a SRE class		
You observe a SRE volunteer displaying inappropriate physical affection towards a child		
Students in your class are continually absent with school dance practice		

Please tick the boxes and sign declaration:

- I have read through the *Child Protection Introductory Training Reading Material*
- I have carefully read what to do and what not to do as listed in *CREATING A SAFE CHILD FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT: Acceptable and Unacceptable Conduct (pages 6-7)*
- I have carefully read the Diocese of Wagga Wagga SRE Code of Conduct and agree to adhere by the code

Signed: _____

Date: _____