SRE Policy and Procedures at Burwood Girls High School

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.

Definitions

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

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

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 - Parents/caregivers may nominate an alternative persuasion, where SRE cannot be offered for students of a particular religious persuasion, or for other reasons. Parents/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 Burwood Girls High School for special religious education

Provision of special religious education

- Principal allows time for SRE where authorised representatives of approved providers are available.
- SRE is an integral part of school activities, taking place in school hours and under the jurisdiction of the school.
- Principal supports SRE by ensuring that no academic instruction or formal school activities occur during time set aside for special religious education.
- 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 Burwood Girls HS the SRE program is coordinated by Brie Pattison who represents the Inner West Scripture team. Ms Pattison is authorised as an SRE teacher by the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, and cross-authorised by the 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 and will have a NSW Working with Children Check.

Timing of SRE at Burwood Girls

- Multi-faith SRE lessons are offered to students in Years 7-12 on Tuesday morning for a 30 minute session, including Greek Orthodox, Catholic, Islam and Protestant
  - Students in Years 10-12 will attend SRE lessons from 10.10-10.40am
  - Students in Years 7-9 will attend SRE from 10.40-11.10am
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 alternative 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 BGHS, parents/caregivers are asked to complete a SRE preference form which outlines all SRE options available at the school. See Attachment 1. 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.

SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In every government school, time is to be allowed for the religious education of children of any religious persuasion.

Completion of the following is optional. This information is used to plan for Special Religious Education (SRE) at individual schools. SRE is taught by approved SRE providers.

Please identify the student's religion if you want the student to participate in SRE.

Information about the organisation of SRE at individual schools, and details of alternative activities, will be provided by your school.

Special Education in Ethics (SEE) is an alternative activity offered at some primary schools for students who do not participate in SRE. Please contact your school if you would like further information about SEE or other alternative activities.

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

Students not attending special religious education

- In the times set aside for SRE, students not attending will remain in their roll call rooms.
- Students will be supervised by their roll 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 class
  - 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protestant</th>
<th>Roman Catholic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brie Pattison</td>
<td>Chris Cox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRE Coordinator</td>
<td>Faith Education Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generate Ministries</td>
<td>Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: <a href="mailto:brie.pattison@gmail.com">brie.pattison@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>E: <a href="mailto:chris.cox@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au">chris.cox@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M: 0412604574</td>
<td>T: (02) 9307 8332</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Islam</th>
<th>Greek Orthodox</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rouba Kodr</td>
<td>Fr George Liagas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Manager</td>
<td>Parish Priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Special Religious Education</td>
<td>St Nectarios Greek Orthodox Church, Burwood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: <a href="mailto:info@isre.org.au">info@isre.org.au</a></td>
<td>E: <a href="mailto:stnectariosburwood@gmail.com">stnectariosburwood@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T: (02) 9708 0880</td>
<td>M: 0415 124 709</td>
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</tbody>
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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 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

- Our HT Wellbeing is the school’s SRE coordinator. Duties of the coordinator include:
  - arranging meetings early in Term 4 between with representatives 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 of 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 a particular part of a course of study.

We will respond sensitively to the beliefs of parents/caregivers and their daughters 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 this link.

**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
- students 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.

**Commemorations, religious observances and multi-faith services in schools**

As a school which celebrates diversity, Burwood Girls HS holds events during the year that contain religious elements such as school commemorations, religious observances and multi-faith services.

These events are the product of consultation with the school community and parents/caregivers are notified of the nature of the service and reminded of their right to withdraw their daughter from the event/service.

At Burwood Girls we celebrate the following events:
- Annual Iftar Dinner with our Muslim families during Ramadan
- Christmas Carols with our Christian families in Term 4 and within the local community

Attachment 1 – SRE Preference Letter
Attachment 2 – Certificate of Exemption
Dear Parent/Caregiver,

Parents/caregivers in public schools have the right to have their children receive instruction in their preferred religious persuasion, where authorised teachers of that persuasion are available.

A special religious education (SRE) program is available at the school and is run by authorised volunteers of approved religious persuasions.

Our records indicate that (INSERT STUDENT NAME)'s:

- [ ] religious persuasion was not nominated on enrolment
- [ ] nominated religious persuasion is not available as a special religious education program at this school.

Below is the list of approved special religious education programs provided at the school for 2016. Additional details of SRE programs on offer at the school can be obtained from SRE providers. Contact details of SRE program coordinators are listed in the school’s SRE Policy and Procedures documentation on our website: (INSERT HYPERLINK).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPTIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Option 1 - PROTESTANT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 2 - GREEK ORTHODOX</td>
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<tr>
<td>Option 3 - CATHOLIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 4 - ISLAM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please nominate the special religious education program you wish your daughter to attend, or indicate that you wish to withdraw your child from special religious education, by completing and returning the tear-off form below.

Students continue in the same arrangement each year, unless a parent/caregiver has requested a change in writing. At any time, you have the right to change your SRE nomination or to withdraw your daughter from the nominated lessons. A note to the Principal will affect this change.

Yours sincerely

Mia Kumar  
Principal

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**I wish my daughter/ward to attend the following special religious education program at Burwood GHS.**

Student Name: _______________________________ Year: ______

Special religious education program: ____________________________________________

Signature of Parent: ____________________________ Date: ________________

**OR**

**I wish to withdraw my daughter/ward from special religious education at Burwood GHS.**

Student Name: _______________________________ Year: ______

I do not wish my daughter/ward to attend any of the school’s SRE programs provided by approved providers.

Signature of Parent: ____________________________ Date: ________________
Burwood Girls High School
Centre of Excellence

SRE – Certificate of Exemption

Student’s name: ____________________________________________________________

Given Name                                  Family Name

Year: ____________

Under the provisions of Section 26 of the Education Act 1990, the above named student is exempt, on the basis of conscientious objection on religious grounds, from the following classes or lessons:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Principal’s signature                  Date

Burwood Girls High School
Centre of Excellence

SRE – Certificate of Exemption

Student’s name: ____________________________________________________________

Given Name                                  Family Name

Year: ____________

Under the provisions of Section 26 of the Education Act 1990, the above named student is exempt, on the basis of conscientious objection on religious grounds, from the following classes or lessons:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Principal’s signature                  Date