2015 Review of Special Religious Education and Special Education in Ethics in NSW Government Schools

13/12/17_31198

NSW Consultative Committee for SRE's responses to the Recommendations of the 2015 Review of Special Religious Education and Special Education in Ethics in NSW Government Schools

Recommendation	Response
15. Providers to place in the public domain a sufficiently detailed description of the processes they use to authorise their SRE teachers and the minimum requirements, qualifications and basic training they require of their SRE teachers.	**Supported:** SRE Providers agree to place in the public domain their Authorisation Processes which will include: – Verification of WWCC clearance – Child Protection Training – Awareness of DoE's Code of Conduct particularly the section on Duty of Care – Completion of Basic Training (see Rec. 24) – Statements in Relation to Specific Crimes (see REIPs) SRE Providers may include a flowchart that illustrates the overall process. In consultation with DoE, the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (ICCOREIS) and the All Faiths SRE (AFSRE) Group have developed policies, procedures and forms to achieve a minimum standard for Teacher Authorisation for all providers.

16. Providers conduct regular audits of SRE teaching and use of approved (authorised) curriculum, and report the results of the audits and any efforts to address any identified issues.	**Supported:**
	SRE Providers agree to conduct regular audits of SRE teaching using a Teacher Review Process which will include: –
	– Teacher Self Reflection and Evaluation (see Rec. 24)
	– Classroom Observations:
	  - as random sample observations by supervisors
	  - in response to concerns identified and/or complaints received
	  - for additional support as identified by either the SRE teacher or supervisor.
	These methods are intended to be both affirming and corrective in nature and training in these practices will be incorporated into Basic SRE Training. (see Rec 24)
	Processes and forms have been developed for self-reflection, evaluation and lesson observation.

Recommendation	Response
17. Faith groups consider forming a joint committee of all faith SRE providers to: **Part (a)** – assist with development of shared guidelines/understanding of requirements	**Supported:** SRE Providers from various faith groups began informal meetings in 2015 and this forum has strengthened and consolidated in 2017 as providers worked through the review recommendations. Sharing of resources and expertise has already become the hallmark of this group. Movement towards a more formal committee is expected to be gradual. In June 2017 Rachele Schonberger was engaged as an advisor and consultant to this group. The attendance of representatives from most faith providers on Tuesday 1 August at the DoE SRE Consultative Committee meeting was a landmark in the formation of the AFSRE Group. (see Rec 17b)
17. Part (b) – develop common minimum standards for authorisation of teachers to increase the confidence of schools and parents that the person is known, suitable and adequately prepared. These should be widely promoted to all providers.	**Supported:** SRE Providers have agreed that the common minimum standard for authorisation of SRE teachers included the following elements: – Verification of WWCC clearance – Child Protection Training – Awareness of DoE's Code of Conduct, particularly the section on Duty of Care – Completion of Basic Training units – Statements in Relation to Specific Crimes (see Rec. 15 and 17a) In consultation with DoE, ICCOREIS and the AFSRE Group have developed policies, procedures and forms to achieve a minimum standard for Teacher Authorisation for all providers.
18. All providers to place in the public domain their curriculum scope and sequence and that this be in sufficient detail for parents/caregivers and schools to be able to understand what is covered in SRE lessons.	**Supported:** The SRE Providers agree to provide access in the public domain to curriculum scope and sequence tables for their respective SRE programs. These tables will include the following components – Title of a unit of work – Sequence of units for the year – Duration of the unit – Outcomes for the students – age and/or stage Most SRE Providers already comply with this condition of the Annual Assurance Letter to the NSW Department for Education. SRE Providers agree to post on their websites a direct link to the syllabus outlines of SRE Program(s) they authorise for use by their SRE Teachers. Posting copies of the various Scope and Sequence charts is not recommended as it may create problems of version control when Curriculum Developers update their syllabuses. SRE Providers who are also Curriculum Developers will be able to use their own websites to provide access to curriculum scope and sequence.

Recommendation	Response
23. Providers make publicly available their complaints policy and procedures.	**Supported:** SRE Providers agree to place in the public domain brief guides to their complaints procedures. These procedures will reflect the provider's own complaints handling policy and be complementary with the policies and procedures of DoE. SRE Providers may also use a simple flow diagram to outline their complaints processes. In consultation with DoE, ICCOREIS and the AFSRE Group have developed policies, procedures and forms to achieve a minimum standard for complaints handling for all providers. We request the DoE assist with the circulation of these documents to all SRE Providers in NSW. SRE Providers request that the next version of the REIP include a reference to DoE school staff informing the relevant SRE Provider(s) when a concern (informal) or a complaint (formal) involves SRE. (see Rec 2)
24. Providers consider offering **a.** the same basic training for all SRE teachers and	**Supported:** **a.** SRE Providers agree that a basic level of initial training will include the following as a minimum – Training in Classroom Management – Child Protection Training – Teaching an authorised curriculum with sensitivity and in a 'learning' age appropriate manner – Training in the practice of self-reflection and evaluation including why
b. more regular on-going training and greater support including mentoring and observation of individual SRE teachers' practices.	**Supported:** **b.** Ongoing formation, training and support is already part of the practice of many SRE providers and all agree to the provision of more training and support in the future. The extent of this work and the timeframe for implementation is to be negotiated and may include training in the use of developing technology. (see Rec 29)
25. Providers inform the department annually what SRE Boards, Associations and Committees they are part of and where. The department publishes a list of Boards, Associations and Committees which includes their membership by school network areas on the departmental website.	**Supported in Principle:** SRE Providers recognise the benefits of providing this information on the activities of 'third party organisations', however do not have the resources to provide this new information to the DoE with any reliability on a regular basis. Experience has shown that SRE Boards, Associations and Committees are often independent in their organisation and flexible by their nature. Therefore it is unrealistic for SRE Providers to undertake the responsibility for reporting on these groups. Providers wish to guard against any potential breach of privacy by avoiding the listing of details of individuals on DoE websites. (see Rec 26)

Recommendation	Response
26. SRE Boards, Associations and Committees inform schools they work with on an annual basis, which religious persuasions are part of the SRE Board, Association or Committee and which curriculum has been cross-authorised. Schools to publish this information on the website and update annually. They should also inform schools of any third party organisation to which they have delegated human resource management functions.	**Supported:** SRE Providers recognise the benefits of providing information on the activities of 'third party organisations' and support the request for SRE Boards, Associations and Committees to inform schools annually. The preferred mechanism to communicate this information to schools is the Combined Arrangements Authorisation form. We request the DoE assist with the circulation of these documents to all SRE Providers in NSW. SRE Providers wish to guard against any potential breach of privacy by avoiding the listing of details of individuals on DoE school websites. (see Rec 25)
28. Providers put in place processes for approval of any materials and internet resources that are used by SRE teachers in their classes and educate SRE teachers about these approval processes.	**Supported in Principle:** Some SRE Authorised Curricula already include AV resources to accompany lesson material. SRE Providers also provide training in the planning of SRE lessons that includes the selection on age appropriate and sensitive resources and teaching strategies. (see Rec 24) SRE curriculum developers will be encouraged to provide guidelines within their teacher's manual for the selection of additional resources. (see Rec 31 and 32) It is noted that some resources used by SRE teachers at the school may fall outside of the Statutory Text and Artistic License under which schools are covered. Providers are responsible for obtaining additional approvals where relevant.
29. Providers consider making available training in use of interactive whiteboards and digital projectors for SRE teachers.	**Supported:** Many SRE Providers already offer this type of training. Most SRE Providers will be able to access training from others or DoE schools when required. Given the concerns of schools regarding use of equipment the best practice may be the offering of local training to SRE teachers specific to the developing technology and their circumstances. (see Rec 24)

30. SRE curriculum developers would benefit from having access to guidelines on what constitutes well-structured curriculum documentation. **Providers** should seek advice from education experts (the department is one source of advice) to gain a shared understanding of:
 	
– what is meant by the term 'curriculum outline'
 	
– what is meant by the term 'curriculum scope and sequence'.
	Supported:
	
	SRE curriculum developers would benefit from having access to guidelines on what constitutes well-structured curriculum documentation. Providers should seek advice from education experts (the department is one source of advice) to gain a shared understanding of:
	
	    – what is meant by the term 'curriculum outline'
	    – what is meant by the term 'curriculum scope and sequence'.
	
	Note: While not all SRE Providers are curriculum developers, all recognise the need to be aware of what constitutes a well-structured curriculum.

Recommendation	Response
31. SRE Curriculum developers would benefit from having access to guidelines on elements that constitute a well-structured teachers' manual. Providers seek advice from education experts (the department is one source of advice) to clarify: – sequence of learning for each school term – lesson plans or lesson planning templates – advice on how students can be challenged and supported in age appropriate ways – advice on strategies to increase student engagement and participation – advice on strategies to accommodate student needs, backgrounds, perspectives and interests – access to resources to support teaching and learning.	**Supported:** SRE Providers recognise the importance of a well-developed curriculum authorised for use by SRE teachers. All aspects of this development including lesson plans, engagement and participation of all students as well as teaching and learning resources will be part of this ongoing development. A generic teacher's manual has been drafted as a model for SRE Curriculum Developers and SRE Providers to use. It will be structured as follows: Context — SRE in Schools; Role of SRE teacher; Code of Conduct Teacher Knowledge — SRE Curriculum; SRE Lessons; SRE Resources. Teaching Practice — Teaching with Sensitivity and Learning Age Appropriateness; Communicating with Students; Classroom Management; Lesson Preparation including adaptation. Learning — Support Structures; Feedback; Self Reflection **Note:** Not all SRE Providers are curriculum developers, however they do agree to review their curriculum and furnish the feedback to the appropriate curriculum developers. These reviews shall take into account the evaluations completed by SRE teachers as part of the Teaching Audit Process. (see Rec 16) A NSW SRE Curriculum Workshop day is planned for SRE Providers, Trainers and Curriculum Developers this year. DoE will arrange a keynote speaker from Futures Learning for this day
32. Providers seek to improve the quality of SRE pedagogy, relevance and age appropriateness of teaching and learning materials. To be developed by the NSW Consultative Committee for SRE.	**Supported:** SRE Providers agree to continual improvement of teaching and learning materials through feedback to curriculum developers from review of teaching and ongoing training of SRE Teachers. (see Rec 24 and 30). A NSW SRE Curriculum Workshop day is planned for SRE Providers, Trainers and Curriculum Developers this year. DoE will arrange a keynote speaker from Futures Learning for this day.

Recommendation	Response
33. Providers and SRE curriculum developers consider effective pedagogies and age appropriate opportunities for learning when reviewing and developing curriculum.	**Supported:** SRE Providers agree to review teaching as part of the Teaching Audit process. (see Rec 16) As part of this process teachers will evaluate the pedagogies and opportunities for learning from the SRE curriculum they have been authorised to use. SRE Providers agree to inform curriculum developers of issues and make suggestions related to pedagogies and opportunities for learning related to the curriculum they authorise. (see Rec 16)
34. Providers and SRE curriculum developers review their curriculums on a cyclical basis (e.g. five-yearly basis).	**Supported:** SRE Providers agree to review on a regular basis, the SRE curriculum that they authorise for use. The Teaching Review Process will form part of these curriculum reviews. (see Rec 16)
35. Providers seek advice from education experts (the department is one source of advice) to develop a shared understanding about what is meant by the term – 'effective pedagogies' – 'relevant learning experiences' – 'age appropriate learning experiences'.	**Supported:** SRE Providers are open to being advised by DoE and other experts on the meaning of the terms 'effective pedagogies' and 'relevant learning experiences'. It is envisaged that the SRE Consultative Committee will continue to be one suitable forum for this type of professional learning. A NSW SRE Curriculum Workshop day is planned for SRE Providers, Trainers and Curriculum Developers this year. DoE will arrange a keynote speaker from Futures Learning for this day

NSW Consultative Committee for SEE response to the recommendations for providers of Special Education in Ethics

Recommendation	Response
47. Primary Ethics to conduct regular audits of SEE teaching and use of approved curriculum and publicly report the results of the audits and any efforts to address any issues identified.	**Supported:** The Primary Ethics classroom support team visits ethics classes to assist volunteer ethics teachers with facilitation and classroom behaviour management skills. The team also notes whether the teacher is following the curriculum. From July 2017 the team has stored curriculum compliance data in an accessible form so that it can be published. Primary Ethics plans to publish compliance rates annually commencing December 2017.
52. Any future providers of SEE should make publicly available their complaints policy and procedures.	**Supported:** Primary Ethics has a publicly available complaints policy and procedure, as noted in the report.

Recommendation	Response
53. Primary Ethics regularly monitors SEE teachers' performance and learning needs and provide more individual support to address these needs including mentoring and observation of individual SEE teachers' practices.	**Supported:** Primary Ethics classroom support team visits ethics classes both proactively and on request to assist teachers with facilitation skills, classroom behaviour management and any other issues that arise. Primary Ethics continues to grow this team of skilled volunteers and provides ongoing training and online resources for all volunteers.
54. Primary Ethics provides training in use of interactive whiteboards and digital projectors for SEE teachers.	**Supported:** Ethics classes are based on philosophical discussion and, as noted in the report, technology is not required for any lesson. Ethics classes are often held in spaces with no access to technology. Ethics teachers sometimes use technology to display, rather than print, the images that are part of the topic stimulus. When a volunteer wishes to use the school's technology they seek the permission and advice of the classroom teacher. Primary Ethics supports teachers with basic information on using technology to support class discussions.
55. Primary Ethics curriculum developers to map the SEE curriculum against the learning continuum provided by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). Requesting the curriculum developers to note aspects of the SEE curriculum that support content descriptions and learning areas within the Australian Curriculum where applicable and appropriate.	**Partly Supported:** Primary Ethics sought advice on several approaches to mapping the SEE curriculum against the ACARA learning continuum. There is considerable difficulty in undertaking a mapping project of capabilities against learning outcomes as the Primary Ethics curriculum has not been written with the deliberate intent to support specific ACARA learning areas (such as English, Mathematics, etc). The Primary Ethics curriculum may support these content areas obliquely, however Primary Ethics considers it would be inappropriate to suggest its curriculum deliberately supports this aspect of the ACARA continuum. For the same reason, Primary Ethics cannot map against all the ACARA General Capabilities. Primary Ethics will, however, complete a high-level mapping of the SEE curriculum against the ACARA F-10 General Capability of Ethical Understanding. The curriculum will be mapped against the organising elements of: – Understanding ethical concepts and issues – Reasoning in decision making and actions – Exploring values, rights and responsibilities However the curriculum will not be mapped against the final element of Ethical understanding in the learning areas -- as stated earlier, the specific Primary Ethics learning outcomes have not been developed to specifically support these areas. The mapping work will be completed by March, 2018.
56. Primary Ethics curriculum developers consider whether there is a need to reduce the amount of repetition in the curriculum to prevent older primary aged students from disengaging.	**Not Supported:** As noted in the ARTD report, the learning model used in ethics classes contains an element of repetition, as is necessary in any skills development program, and this repetition is a common feature of the Department's own pedagogy. Some concepts in the Primary Ethics curriculum, such as fairness, are revisited in different ways across a number of learning stages to build student understanding. Lessons often contain scenarios that are similar but subtly different – and it is the subtle differences which provoke the deeper consideration designed to help students practice and develop their critical thinking and moral reasoning skills. The ARTD authors could not illustrate the nature of concerns about repetition.