



## Special Religious Instruction (SRI) Policy

(Ratified by School Council: July 2015)

### **PURPOSE:**

To clearly detail the requirements regarding the provision of Special Religious Instruction with which schools must comply from 14 July 2014 under Ministerial Direction MD141.

The only exception to secular education in government schools is *special religious instruction* which is made available in a government school during the regular hours of instruction.

Students and teachers have the rights to freedom of religion and belief, freedom of expression and freedom of association under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006.

### **GUIDELINES:**

When SRI is offered at Glen Waverley Primary School, it must:

- be scheduled as part of the school timetable
- be conducted for no more than an average of 30 minutes per week
- meet the school's duty of care obligations, scheduling decisions must take into account the need to provide adequate supervision of both the students who are participating in SRI and those who are not
- make specific reference to the school community that SRI is not compulsory for any student
- seek parental permission must be given via the prescribed form – CFMD141 – for a child to participate in SRI. No other consent form can be used for this purpose.
- Issue new SRI forms whenever a school is approached by an SRI volunteer seeking to deliver SRI and this should be done at least annually in a school that offers SRI.

**Note:** That the school enrolment form does not provide any opportunity for parents to provide consent for their child's participation in SRI – the prescribed CFMD141 consent form must be used for this purpose.

### **IMPLEMENTATION:**

*"If a principal receives notification from an accredited and approved instructor that the instructor is available to deliver special religious instruction at the school the principal must offer parents of children enrolled at the school the opportunity for their children to be provided with special religious instruction."* Ministerial Direction (MD141)

- Principals must ensure, by consulting with the Department, that only accredited instructors, approved by the Minister, provide SRI at a Government school.
- Accredited SRI instructors are volunteers with a religious affiliation, who have received training from an approved provider and are auspiced by a specific church or religious organisation.

- Accredited instructors have undertaken training through their accredited provider which includes how to undertake their role in Government schools, focusing on the code of conduct that instructors are required to sign up to prior to receiving accreditation. This Code of Conduct requires volunteers to follow certain Departmental policy.
- Instructors must be supervised by a teacher at all times.

Providers approved to accredit instructors must ensure that instructors:

- are registered with the Provider
- obtain a Working With Children Check (WWCC) and maintain a valid WWCC
- undertake regular training
- comply with minimum suitability standards for persons who work or volunteer with children
- sign up to a Code of Conduct established by the Department and
- receive Ministerial approval

**Note:** Instructors cannot commence instruction until they have received a WWCC card (an application is not sufficient).

A copy of the instructor's formal accreditation must be retained on the school's records. This accreditation includes a WWCC and principals must retain a copy of the instructor's current WWCC details on the school's records.

Principals must ensure that SRI instructors are accredited by one of the following agencies.

Religion	Accrediting Provider
Christianity	<a href="#">ACCESS Ministries</a> 
Catholicism	<a href="#">Catholic Education Office</a> 
Islam	<a href="#">Arkan Toledo/Islamic Council of Victoria</a> 
Judaism	<a href="#">United Jewish Education Board</a> 
Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism, Orthodox Christianity, Bahá'í faith and others	<a href="#">Religions for Peace Australia (RfP)</a> 

Anti-discrimination laws require that students who do not attend SRI must not be treated less or more favourably than students who participate in SRI.

Students who do not attend SRI must be adequately supervised by a teacher and engaged in educationally valuable tasks at the time that SRI is being provided to the students who have opted-in. This may include self-study, revision, personal literacy or numeracy tasks, community service, peer mentoring and participation in clubs.

A principal must ensure that students who do not attend SRI must not be provided with instruction in areas within the Australian Curriculum in Victoria (AusVELS) while other students are participating in SRI.

**RELATED LEGISLATION:**

Ministerial Direction 141 – Special Religious Instruction in Government Schools  
SRI Parent Consent form (CFMD141) (pdf - 88.59kb)  
Education and Training Reform Act 2006  
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

**RELATED POLICIES:**

Working with Children Policy

**POLICY EVALUATION:**

Evaluation will be conducted by Policy Review (Education) Subcommittee.

**DUE DATE FOR REVIEW:**

Due for review in July 2017.