RELIGIOUS EDUCATION POLICY

**DEFINITION**

Special Religious Education (SRE) is education in the beliefs and practices of an approved religious persuasion by authorised representatives of that persuasion. SRE is known at Kororo Public School as ‘Scripture’.

Special education in Ethics is education in ethical decision making, action and reflection within a secular framework, based on a branch of philosophy.

General Religious Education (GRE) 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.

**SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - 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’.

The procedures for SRE in public schools consider:

* recommendations 36-72 of the report, *Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools (1980)*, which were adopted by the government of the day as the basis of an agreement with the churches about the implementation of SRE;
* *Education Act 1990* Section 33A*,* an amendment approved in 2010 to allow the option of special education in ethics for parents/caregivers who do not wish their children to attend SRE; and
* the recommendations of the *Final Report from the Inquiry into Education Amendment (Ethics Classes Repeal) Bill 2011* that were published in June 2012.

The provision of special religious education is not government funded.

**PARENT/CAREGIVER RIGHTS**

*The right to religious education:*

Parents/caregivers in public schools 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 special religious education.

SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Kororo Public School will adhere to the DEC policy relating to the implementation of SRE procedures. The DEC Policy and Procedures in this regard are available online or alternatively on the Kororo Public School website. Links to these documents and sites can be found in the appendix.

In consultation with the Principal, the Deputy Principal (DP) at Kororo Public School is responsible for the coordination of SRE in the school. The DP will ensure that a suitable timetable for SRE lessons during designated school hours, is negotiated between the SRE provider and the school. They will ensure that no formal school activities nor academic instruction, occurs during the time set aside for SRE as per DEC implementation procedures

Special education in Ethics is an option for students not attending SRE, and will be available when qualified and approved personnel and are available. Special education in Ethics is coordinated by an external provider endorsed by the DEC and is timetabled to occur at the same time as SRE lessons for any given class.

The authorisation of personnel to teach special religious education and ethics classes is the sole responsibility of each individual approved provider. The provider will ensure that all child protection checks are current and valid and will provide the DE with a list of registered personnel.

Duties of the SRE and Ethics Class Coordinator (DP) include:

* arranging meetings early in Term 4 between the school and representatives of the approved religious providers to organise special religious education for the following year.
* arranging meetings early in Term 4 between the school and the authorised representatives of approved ethics providers to organise ethics education for the following year.
* liaising with special religious education and ethics teachers to:
  + familiarise them with the procedures and operations of the school, especially at the beginning of the year; and
  + advise them of any variations of school routine affecting special religious education.
* maintaining student records, including:
  + a current list of the authorised special religious education teachers from the approved religious providers;
  + a current list of the authorised ethic class teachers from the approved representative;
  + registers of the names of students in each class for the special religious education teachers and the ethics teachers; and
  + registers of children who are exempt from SRE and/or Ethics classes and details of the arrangements provided to parents for those children, while these classes are being taught.
* advising parents/caregivers of arrangements for special religious education classes for the next year and ongoing information about any changes as they occur.
* advising parents/caregivers of the arrangements for ethics classes for the next year and ongoing information about any changes as they occur.

At Kororo Public School, SRE classes occur once each week in one allocated 30 min lesson per class. The organisation of the SRE timetable will allow for the effective supervision arrangements for students who are not attending SRE lessons. Students who do not attend SRE lessons have the option of attending Ethics classes when an approved representative is available to teach the group. Students who do not attend either class during SRE time or where a provider is not available, will be supervised in the nearest classroom of a similar age cohort of students. Parents will be notified at the commencement of each school year of the arrangements for SRE classes, Ethics and non participants of either class.

It is Kororo Public School protocol that teachers remain in the classroom when SRE lessons are being undertaken. The Deputy Principal is responsible for the supervision of Ethics Classes.

**School Implementation - General Religious Education (GRE)**

General Religious Education within the context of the NSW Department of Education and communities may include a diverse range of elements.

* Curriculum related programs with a religious base
* School Chaplains
* School Prayers
* School Commemorations
* Multi Faith Services

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. Section 33 of the Act also allows an exemption for students from receiving GRE where parents /caregivers object on other grounds to students receiving that education.

The DEC policy in regard to GRE clearly states: ‘The Principal is responsible for responding sensitively to the beliefs of parents/caregivers and their children and for taking all steps to minimise feelings of discomfort or embarrassment on the part of students. This will be aided by the publication of a clear statement of school policy and procedures for the benefit of staff and parents/caregivers.’

The GRE program is primarily taught through curriculum based studies in the classroom. Students in DEC NSW schools are required to adhere to Board of Studies documents, the content of which is freely available at the school and online for parents to view. Teachers are required to inform their supervisors of the nature and content of units of work which deviate from the school endorsed scope and sequence. All parents will be provided with an overview of their child’s units of study at the commencement of the school year.

Under Sections 26 and 33 of the Education Act, no child at a government school is to be required to receive any general religious education or special religious education if the parent of that child objects to the child’s receiving that education. In circumstances where a parent/caregiver conscientiously objects to any component of the general religious education program, an exemption form is available from the office and can also be downloaded from the Kororo Public School website. A copy of the completed school exemption form will be forwarded to each parent/caregiver for their records.

The Deputy Principal is responsible for maintaining a register of students who have been exempt from any element of the general religious education program. This may include exemption from a course of study or a school community endorsed procedure including the use of a school prayer. Teachers will be provided with a copy of the up to date register at the beginning of each year. They will also be notified individually during the year, should an exemption by submitted to the principal.

The DP will monitor the number of students who are considered exempt from any element of GRE and will discuss with individual parents a suitable course of action to ensure the exemption is respectful of the individual child at school. If agreement cannot be reached between the school and the parent/caregivers, the DEC Complaints Handling Procedures will be utilised and the School Director informed.

**SCHOOL PRAYERS**

Schools are permitted to use or to write school prayers. These prayers are to be interdenominational Christian or multi-faith to reflect the diversity of the school community.

The Education Act 1990, section 33 states parents/caregivers can object to any general religious education. Children of parents/caregivers who have indicated this objection, including their children being present when prayers are said, should be supervised in another area of the school. Parents are requested to complete an exemption form, indicating the component/s of general religious education that they object to, on behalf of their child.

The DP will monitor the number of students who are considered exempt from any element of GRE, including the school prayer and will discuss with individual parents a suitable course of action to ensure the exemption is respectful of the individual child at school. If agreement cannot be reached between the school and the parent/caregivers, the DEC Complaints Handling procedures will be utilised and the School Director informed.

The School Prayer and details of the occasions on which the prayer will be used, will be published in the KPS handbook for distribution to all new parents and enrolling students. The school’s Religious Education Policy will include a clear statement concerning the school prayer and will be available for all parents on the school website.

Consultation with the school community should occur about both the prayer and the types of occasions on which it will be used. This consultation will occur when deemed necessary by the school principal or the Kororo Public School Parents and Citizens Association (P & C) as representatives of the school community. The consultation process will not occur more frequently than once in every five years. Consultation may involve a revision of the school GRE implementation procedures to reflect current community opinion.

Consultation will include:

* a detailed explanation in the newsletter of the DEC and school policy as it stands at the time;
* a survey for all families to return to the school – one survey per family, clearly identifying the family name on the return and returned within the nominated time frame;
* questions seeking opinion as to the endorsed wording/text of the prayer;
* opinions as to the occasions on which the prayer will be used if endorsed; and
* information around the manner by which the school will supervise students exempt from saying the prayer.

Whilst the school recognises that there is a considered interest in school policy and procedures within the broader community, the consultation will only be open to families who currently have a student on the school attendance register.

Parents/Carers are encouraged to communicate any concerns relating to the SRE or GRE implementation procedures with the school directly, addressing their concerns in the first instance to the school principal.

**School Prayer** (as at November 2013)

This is our school

Let peace dwell here

Let the rooms be full of contentment

Let love abide here

Love of one another

Love of mankind

Love of life itself

And love of God

Let us remember that as many hands build a house

So many hearts make a school

The school prayer will be recited at the following school occasions:

* At class item student assemblies. These typically occur each fortnight and are advertised in the school Newsletter and on the school website.
* Student Representative Council Assemblies conducted by the school elected SRC. These typically occur once per term and are advertised in the school Newsletter and on the school website.



“Understanding Through Communication”

3 Korora School Road, Korora NSW 2450 ph (02) 6653 6201 fax (02) 6653 6776

email – [kororo-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:kororo-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au)

**Religious Education Exemption Request**

No child at a government school is to be required to receive any general religious education or special religious education, if the parent of that child objects to the child receiving that education.

The Education Act 1990 Section 26 and 33, allows for an exemption for students from attending classes/lessons at the request of parent/caregivers. Under the requirements of this Act, I wish to apply for an exemption for my child from the following elements of Special Religious Education and/or General Religious Education.

Special Religious Education – also known as Scripture.

I would like my child to attend Special Education in Ethics classes should there be a vacancy in the appropriate age cohort. YES NO

General Religious Education – parents are asked to please specify which elements of general religious education they wish to seek exemption from on behalf of their child, including the school prayer.

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Please provide my child with a Certificate of Exemption from the nominated classes ,lesson or school procedure . I understand that this Exemption will remain in place until it is removed or replaced at my written request.

Child’s name:………………………………………………………………… Class:…………………………………………………….

Parent name:………………………………………………………………. Contact details……………………………………..

Signature………………………………………………………………………. Date……………………………………………………….



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**Religious Education Exemption Certificate**

Under the provisions of the Education Act 1990, the child named below is exempt as a result of parental / caregiver request, from the following elements of the Religious Education program at Kororo Public School.

This exemption will remain current until withdrawn in writing by the parent/carer.

Special Religious Education – also known as Scripture

General Religious Education – specific components for which this exemption applies.

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Child’s name:………………………………………………………………… Class:……………………………………………

Parent name:…………………………………………………………………

Signature………………………………………………………………………. Date………………………………………………

Principal

Sue Mackay

**Appendix:**

Links to documents mentioned in the above policy –

* Religious Education Policy

<https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/curriculum/schools/spec_religious/PD20020074_i.shtml?level>=

* Implementation Procedures

<https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/curriculum/schools/spec_religious/REimplementproced.pdf>

* Special Education in Ethics Policy

<https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/curriculum/schools/ethics/PD20130436.shtml>

* Special Education in Ethics Procedures
* Kororo Public School Website

<http://www.kororo-p.schools.nsw.edu.au/>

* School Exemption Request
* School Exemption Certificate
* Kororo Public School Religious Education Policy