



Dear Principal

**Important information regarding the enrolment process
for Special Religious Education**

The proposed 2019 *Special Religious Education Procedures* (SREPs) state:

An implementation flowchart assists principals with decisions associated with student participation in SRE.

Please note that the current version of the *Implementing Special Religious Education (SRE) & Special Education in Ethics (SEE) in NSW Government schools* flowchart located at

<https://schoolsequella.det.nsw.edu.au/file/20ac65f4-f34e-49a3-946a-ef4bf9557a96/1/SRE-SEE-flowchart.pdf>

does not provide directions about what procedure principals are to follow **if the SRE Participation Letter sent home to parents/caregivers is not returned.**

FIRIS is aware that some special religious education providers have stated if the *SRE Participation/Preference Letter* is not returned, those students should be placed in the SRE class 'deemed most suitable'. However, the NSW Minister for Education has stated:

*If the parents/caregivers do not return the letter, the student will engage in alternative meaningful activities during time allocated for SRE. (See **Appendix 1**)*

Mr Rod Megahey, Acting Director, Early Learning and Primary Education, has also confirmed this policy position on behalf of the Secretary of the Department of Education, Mr Mark Scott. (See **Appendix 2**)

See below for a version of the current enrolment flowchart for 2019 incorporating this information.

Please note that FIRIS interprets both the Minister's and Mr Megahey's statements as confirming the Department's position that no student should be placed in a SRE class without express consent from a parent or caregiver.

Yours sincerely,

Darrin Morgan
FIRIS NSW Operations Director

23 July 2018



SRE SEE



Implementing Special Religious Education (SRE) &
Special Education in Ethics (SEE) in NSW Government schools

Enrolment

At enrolment the school provides general information about SRE, SEE, and alternative meaningful activities.

The parent/caregiver has indicated a religious persuasion available on the enrolment form.

The parent/caregiver has left the religious persuasion blank or has written 'no religion' on the enrolment form.

The parent/caregiver has indicated a religious persuasion not available on the enrolment form.

Student engages in nominated SRE program.

Principal to send letter to the parent/caregiver containing general information about how SRE, SEE and alternative meaningful activities are organised, as well as a SRE participation letter. The SRE participation letter outlines the options available for SRE including the option to withdraw.

The parent/caregiver returns letter nominating religious persuasion student engages in nominated SRE program.

If SEE is established and the parent/caregiver returns letter withdrawing from SRE principal to send letter to the parent/caregiver with information about SEE and the opportunity to enrol. Student engages in meaningful activities during SRE time pending SEE response.

If SEE is not established and the parent/caregiver returns letter withdrawing from SRE student engages in meaningful activities during SRE time. If a parent/caregiver requests SEE, the principal is to provide the name and contact details of Primary Ethics.

The parent/caregiver does not return SRE participation letter. Student engages in meaningful activities during SRE time

The parent/caregiver returns letter enrolling in SEE. Student engages in SEE program.

The parent/caregiver does not return letter. Student engages in meaningful activities during SRE time.

Please Note:

- Parents/caregivers 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 arrangements each year, unless a parent/caregiver has requested a change

Further information and resources available at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/curriculum/religion-and-ethics>

Appendix 1

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
Tuesday 14 November 2017

Answer—

On 21 September 2017, the Marrickville Service Centre had 23.28 full time equivalent positions. In 2016-17, over 5,900 driving tests were conducted, over 198,000 customers were served and over 190,000 transactions were completed.

*6731 PROCEDURAL ADVICE GIVEN TO PRINCIPAL'S—Ms Jo Haylen asked the Minister for Education—

What is the procedural response from the Department of Education and/or the Minister for Education if a Principal requests advice as to how to enrol a student whose SRE Participation Form is not returned?

Answer—

I'm advised that New South Wales public schools use information provided in the enrolment form to allocate students to Special Religious Education (SRE) classes.

If a religious persuasion is nominated, and a relevant SRE program is available at the school, the student will be placed in that program. If there is no nominated persuasion or the persuasion is unavailable, the school sends a letter to parents/caregivers outlining options available, including the option to withdraw from SRE.

If the parents/caregivers do not return the letter, the student will engage in alternative meaningful activities during time allocated for SRE. Suitable activities include reading, private study and completing homework. Ethics classes may also be an option in some schools.

Question asked on 21 September 2017 (session 56-1) and printed in the NSW Legislative Assembly's *Question and Answers No. 149 Thursday 21 September 2017*, Question 6731, p. 6198.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/la/papers/Documents/2017/21-september-2017-questions-and-answers/149-QandA-P.pdf> - accessed 08.07.2018

Answer received on 25 October 2017 and printed in the NSW Legislative Assembly's *Question and Answers No. 156 Tuesday 14 November 2017*, Question 6731, p. 6471.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/la/papers/Documents/2017/14-november-2017-questions-and-answers/156-QandA-P.pdf> - accessed 08.07.2018.

Appendix 2



Education
Public Schools

Dr Darrin Morgan
NSW Operations Director
Fairness in Religions in School
PO BOX 2296
DANGAR NSW 2309

DGL17/1116

Dear Dr Morgan

I write in response to your letter of 14 November 2017, to Mr Mark Scott AO, Secretary, Department of Education, regarding a lack of a response by the NSW Department of Education to email correspondence and Special Religious Education (SRE) in NSW Government schools. The Secretary has asked me to respond on his behalf.

I sincerely apologise for the delay in providing a response to your letter of 29 September 2017 to Dr Paul Wood.

NSW public schools use information provided in the enrolment form to set up SRE classes. If a religious persuasion is provided on the enrolment form, and available at the school, then the student will be placed in that SRE program.

If 'no' religion is written, or where there is no nominated persuasion or the persuasion is unavailable, then the school sends a SRE participation letter to parents/caregivers which outlines the options available for SRE, including the option to withdraw.

If the SRE participation letter to parents/caregivers is not returned, it is expected that the school would make all reasonable attempts to seek a response from the parents/caregivers regarding whether the student participates in SRE at the school.

If the parents/caregivers do not return the SRE participation letter, the student will engage in alternative meaningful activities during time allocated for SRE. Suitable activities include reading, private study and completing homework.

For further information about this matter you may wish to contact the SRE/SEE Officer by email on SREcontact@det.nsw.edu.au or by phone on 9244 5484.

Yours sincerely

Rod Megahey
A/Director, Early Learning and Primary Education
15 November 2017

LEARNING AND TEACHING, EARLY LEARNING AND PRIMARY EDUCATION

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