

Wise Ministry for SRE Teachers and Helpers

SRE Teachers and Helpers engage with children and young people outside of the normal church environment. This means that there are some additional safe ministry considerations that take into account the requirements of schools and the implications of serving in a church ministry outside of the standard church environment.

AUTHORITY AND REPORTING

When teaching Special Religious Education (SRE) in Department of Education schools, SRE Teachers and Helpers are responsible to the School Principal at all times while they are on the school grounds.

If an SRE Teacher or Helper has reasonable grounds to suspect a child has been abused or is at risk of harm, they must:

1. Write down what they are worried about - what they saw and heard in factual language (like that used in making a police statement) and the context of what they saw and heard. They must:
 - A. Report to the **School Principal** (this should be done immediately after the teaching responsibility has finished, normally after the SRE lesson is completed).
 - B. Report to the **Conduct Protocol Unit** (CPU). This can be done directly, or through the authorising church, by notifying the Minister or Session Clerk, who will report to the CPU.

When there is an allegation against the School Principal, a report must be made to the Directorate of Educational Leadership. Contact details for the Directorate can be obtained from the Department of Education Professional and Ethical Standards Unit on 02 7814 3722. You can also consult with the Conduct Protocol Unit for guidance.

2. Once a concern has been raised, the School Principal should communicate back to the SRE Teacher or Helper that they have reported to the appropriate authorities - Police and/or to Community Services. The SRE Teacher or Helper should then write down the conversation/communication about what action was taken and advise the CPU.

The SRE Teacher or Helper must not talk to anyone other than the School Principal or the CPU about the incident. If further debriefing is needed, the CPU can be asked for a referral to the CPU chaplain or for a counselling referral through Jericho Road to discuss the matter in a confidential space.



WISE MINISTRY PRACTICES

SRE Teachers and Helpers must take the time to think about the specifics of their role and how they will be prioritising the safety of those they teach and implementing measures to maintain accountability and integrity. At minimum, the following wise ministry practices must be observed:

- Identify who is your support person. This is often the class teacher who remains present for the lesson in primary schools, or Head Teacher in high schools. Ask them if there are any special needs that you should know in advance. This could be related to health, emotional or behavioural issues that could impact on your ability to teach and provide Duty of Care. Please note that as part of its online training Presbyterian Youth provides a Duty of Care module for High School SRE teachers.
- In teaching the approved curriculums and participating in school, you must be sensitive and age appropriate at all times.
- Before commencing an SRE role at a new school, it is important to find out some key information. In the case of an accident or if a child is unwell, check where to send students requiring first aid. This is usually the school's office. Find out what the school's procedure is concerning giving permission for a student to leave the classroom: buddy pair, note etc.
- SRE Teachers and Helpers must comply with the school's policies relating to safety when assessing risk of learning activities such as games, making food etc. Activities in approved SRE materials should align with school policies, however if you are unsure, please check with the class teacher or the SRE coordinator beforehand.
- Check with the class teacher for any minor concerns. For example, a child might say she is afraid to go home. A quiet word with the teacher could explain the student's worry. The worry could be due to an incident before school where damage done to a parent's car by the child who left their bike in the driveway, or it could be a signal there is something more serious going on and that this information needs to be considered with other signs.
- SRE Teachers and Helpers are never to be alone with only one child at any time. However, if the situation arises that a child comes into the classroom while the SRE Teacher is setting up the lesson, just ask the child to wait outside for the rest of class to arrive. If the child will not leave, then you step out to find a teacher to help you.
- Any communication or resource that an SRE teacher would like to send home must be shown to the SRE Coordinator and School Principal for approval.
- SRE Teachers and Helpers must also be wise with physical contact. Avoid hugging students and being overly affectionate. If a child insists on being hugged, a side hug is preferable. Better still is to use a high-five to greet or congratulate someone.