

# SPECIAL RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

## POLICY

Ripponlea Primary School (“RPS”) is supportive of religious and cultural beliefs and seeks to accommodate all faiths and traditions.

## PURPOSE

This Policy sets out the RPS approach to Special Religious Instruction as defined in Section 2.2.11 of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)* (“the Act”). The Act makes the following distinctions

- General religious education being “education about major forms of religious thought and expression characteristic of Australian society and other societies in the world”.
- Special religious instruction (SRI) being “instruction provided by churches and other religious groups and based on distinctive religious tenets and beliefs”.

## IMPLEMENTATION

1. Ministerial Direction 145 (MD145) gives Principals in government schools the decision-making responsibilities around SRI in their schools. Principals may decide to offer, or not to offer, to change the time, or to cease offering SRI, based on the circumstances of their particular school.
2. MD145 sets out the requirements for SRI, which include the following:
  - a. students may only attend SRI for a maximum of 30 minutes per week, during lunchtime, or in the hour before or after school;
  - b. attendance must not be compulsory for any student;
  - c. the SRI program must operate as an ‘opt-in’ extra-curricular activity that students may only attend with their parents’ informed consent, which consent can be withdrawn at any time;
  - d. all SRI program activities must be supervised by at least one school teacher;
  - e. SRI can only be provided by accredited instructors who are approved by the Minister for Education;
  - f. the only program materials that can be used as part of SRI are those that are approved by the instructor’s accredited provider and that are available for parents to access online;
  - g. SRI instructors are visitors to schools and must comply with the policies of the Department of Education and Training (“DET”) on Volunteer Workers and Visitors in Schools;
  - h. students who attend SRI must not be offered any enticement or other benefit of a tangible nature; and
  - i. SRI instructors must not attempt to convert students to a particular religion or invite students to attend activities outside of SRI.
3. Principals have the decision-making responsibilities around SRI in their schools; however, it is important that they carefully consider the circumstances of their school and the views of all the school community when making the decision about whether to offer SRI.
4. At RPS, in making a decision regarding SRI the Principal will have regard to relevant considerations such as the following:

- a. the level of demand by parents for SRI to be delivered at RPS;
  - b. the availability of teaching staff to appropriately supervise the delivery of the SRI program;
  - c. the availability of an accredited and approved instructor to deliver the SRI program;
  - d. the availability of school funds to employ casual relief teachers, if required, to provide supervision;
  - e. the availability of an appropriate space in which SRI may be delivered at the times an instructor is available;
  - f. the timetabling of any other extra-curricular activities;
  - g. the views of the RPS School Council;
  - h. the views of the school community, and
  - i. any other matters the Principal considers relevant in the particular circumstances.
5. If the Principal decides that SRI shall be offered the Principals must ensure:
- a. written parental/guardian consent has been obtained in the prescribed form – CFMD145 (refer to references below). If a parent/guardian does not provide the consent form within the timeframe specified in the form, the student must not participate in SRI.
  - b. the instructor is not a government school teacher;
  - c. instructors are accredited by an approved provider;
  - d. a copy of the instructor's formal accreditation (including WWCC details) is retained in the RPS school records;
  - e. instructors do not continue to instruct if their WWCC card has expired;
  - f. instructors comply with the RPS Working with Children Check Policy and Visitors to School Policy;
  - g. instructors are supervised by a school teacher at all times; and
  - h. any instructor conduct that does not meet the requirements of the Code of Conduct or this Policy is reported to the DET's central Wellbeing, Health and Engagement Division as soon as practicable upon discovery of failure to meet these requirements.

## RELATED POLICIES

- Visitors to School
- Working with Children Check
- Duty of Care

## RELATED LEGISLATION

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)

## REFERENCES:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/sri.aspx>

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/principals/spag/curriculum/sriparentconsent.pdf>

**Ratified by School Council: 19 June 2017**  
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