**Overview**

### SCHOOLS FACTSHEET JULY 2018

# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

This factsheet outlines the general procedures and responsibilities of principals in coordinating the teaching of religious education in ACT Public Schools in accordance with the *Education Act* (the Act), *Section 29* and the *Religious Education in ACT Public Schools Policy* and associated procedure.

**Procedure**

**Requesting Religious Education**

As per the Act, parents of children at an ACT Public School may request that their child receive religious education in a particular religion. If such a request is received, there is a requirement that reasonable time is allowed for the child to receive religious education in the requested religion.

**Organising Religious Education**

It is the responsibility of the principal to coordinate the teaching of religious education to ensure compliance with the *Religious Education in ACT Public School procedures.*

People providing religious instruction in schools must:

* Be approved to provide the religious education program by the authorised religious body.
* Hold a current registration under the *Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011*.
* Carry their Working with Vulnerable People registration card with them on school premises.
* Comply with the Education Directorate’s *Working with Children and Young People (Volunteers and Visitors) Interim Policy*.
* Comply with and abide by the *Working with Children and Young People Code of Conduct for Volunteers and Visitors*.

Before admitting the religious body’s representative to the school to deliver the program, the principal must:

* Sight proof of the authorised religious body’s endorsement of the volunteer and/or provider.
* Sight proof of the religious body’s representative endorsement as an income tax exempt charity and/or governing documents containing acceptable clauses showing the organisation’s non-profit status.
* Sight evidence of Working with Vulnerable People registration with Access Canberra of the representative delivering religious education classes.
* Provide the representative with clear advice on their roles and responsibility in relation to the *Working with Children and Young People (Volunteers and Visitors) Interim Policy*, as well as any specific school requirements.
* Review materials such as visual aids and handouts used in the program to ensure that the material is suitable for students at their school – principals are **not** responsible for content development for religious education.

The religious education body is:

* Responsible for developing and providing program content, materials and resources as well as ensuring suitability for the targeted children.

**Implementing Religious Education**

**Students Undertaking Religious Education**

Explicit parental consent must be obtained for children to participate in religious education classes. Classes should be organised for a reasonable time, which is defined as no more than forty minutes for one lesson; or 7 hours per school term as negotiated with the principal. The principal has some discretion which can be exercised in negotiating with the provider/s as to what is reasonable for students at their school.

Students undertaking a religious education class must be separated from other students at the school, and a suitable location should be found on school grounds. The selected site must provide appropriate outside visibility to enable periodic observation by the school principal and/or teaching or administration staff.

**Students Not Undertaking Religious Education**

For students who are not attending the religious education program, schools must provide classes from the regular, approved school curriculum during the duration of this religious instruction.

**Duty of Care**

It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that all reasonable care is taken to protect the safety of any children against injury or harm that should have reasonably been foreseen.

**Contact**

**Responsible Persons**

The Director, Learning and Teaching is responsible for this policy and procedure. For support, contact the Learning and Teaching Branch on: (02) 6205 9205.

**Complaints**

Any concerns about the application of the policy or procedure should be raised with:

* The school principal in the first instance
* The Education Directorate’s Liaison Unit on: (02) 6205 5429
* Online at: <http://www.education.act.gov.au/contact_us>

**References**

**Legislation**

* *Education Act 2004*: provides for the organisation and governance of ACT public schools.
* *Working with Vulnerable People (Background Checking) Act 2011*: provides for background checking and registration of people who work with vulnerable people.

**Policies**

* *Religious Education in ACT Public Schools Policy 2016*: supports ACT public schools in delivering religious education in accordance with the *Education Act*.
* *Working with Children and Young People (Volunteers and Visitors) Interim Policy 2016:* provides a framework to protect the rights of students to work and learn in a safe and well organised environment.

**Procedures**

* *Religious Education in ACT Public Schools Procedure*
* *Working with Children and Young People – Volunteers and Visitors (Interim) Procedure*
* *Working with Children and Young People Code of Conduct for Volunteers and Visitors*