



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA



SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

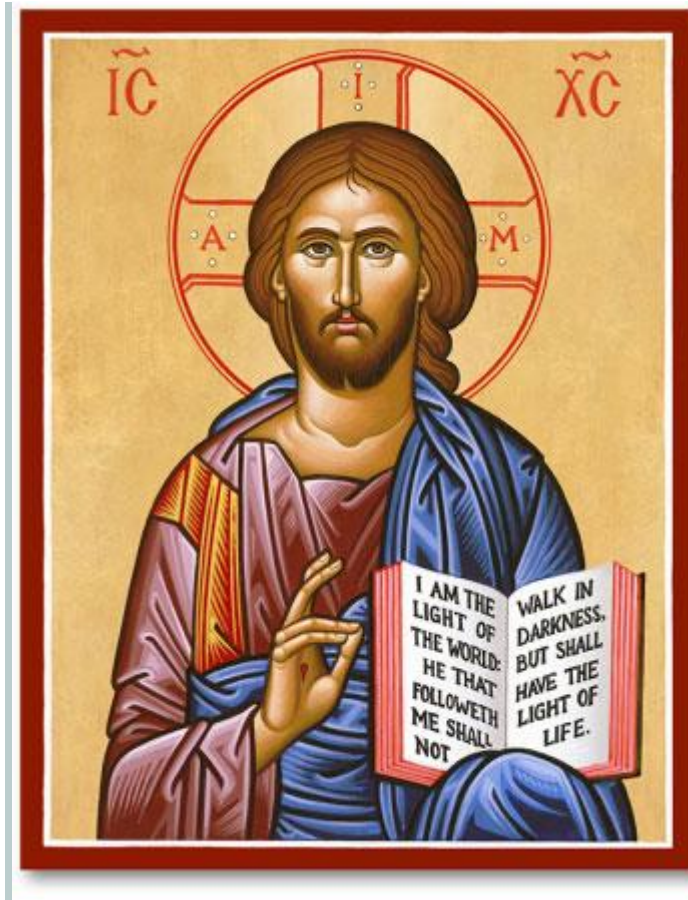
BASIC ACCREDITATION COURSE

TEACHER'S MANUAL

REVISED JANUARY 2023

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PRAYER OF THE CATECHIST



Christ the true light, which enlightens and sanctifies everyone who comes into the world, may the light of Your countenance be signed upon us, so that in it we may see the unapproachable light, and may you direct our steps towards performing your commandments through the intercessions of your all-pure Mother and all your Saints. Amen

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PREFACE



The Basic Accreditation Course is the first stage in an effort to provide some training and accreditation for school catechists (also known as Scripture Teachers). Before 2007 there was no formal induction for school catechists although there were training sessions held annually.

The Basic Accreditation Course is one part of the overall program of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia to improve Special Religious Education (SRE). It was organised originally with the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos and now operates under the supervision of the Chancellor of the Archdiocese.

The purpose of this manual is to accompany the presentations in the basic accreditation course. The notes summarise only some of the key aspects the Orthodox program. Please retain them as a reference.

These notes are for inter-office circulation. Comments and criticisms are welcomed but the notes should not be cited as a reference. Please draw our attention to any errors or omissions and these will be rectified in the next printing. The manual is updated for each subsequent Basic Accreditation Course.

Advisory Committee on the Teaching of Religion in State Schools

January 2023

INTRODUCTION



The mission of the Church has always been to serve the Orthodox faithful. This is undertaken in many different ways and one of these is through the Special Religious Education in State Schools that is commonly called “Scripture”.

“Scripture” is a shorthand term that is in common use. It refers to the official Special Religious Education program in State Schools in New South Wales.

The Scripture classes in State Schools offer a program for those parents who would like their children to receive some religious education but are unable otherwise to provide this content.

Scripture teachers are community educators. They represent the Orthodox Church. They offer their services voluntarily to the community.

This entire program is based on love and respect for children. The teachers provide a living example of the Orthodox ethos. A key goal is to provide a positive experience that will remain in the children’s’ hearts for many years.

THE ORGANISATION OF SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Greek Orthodox parishes and communities in this State try to assist parents in providing a religious education for their children in many different ways.

Unfortunately, many Orthodox children are unable to attend the full-time Greek Orthodox colleges or the afternoon or Saturday-morning Greek schools or even the Sunday Schools in each parish.

School catechists are therefore vital to the work of every parish. They are in the front line of education. They assist the parish priest and also support parents in their responsibility to teach their children.

Without the school catechists many of our Greek Orthodox students in government schools in New South Wales would have no exposure at all to an Orthodox education.

The parish

The Special Religious Education in which you are involved is organised at the parish level. It consists of lay people, who with the blessing and direction of their parish priest, voluntarily undertake the task of instructing children in their faith.

Each parish priest has the ultimate responsibility of providing a religious education. He selects and approves the Scripture Teachers that go into the government schools in the parish.

The parish priest is responsible to the Chancellor of the Archdiocese for all the Scripture Teachers.

In some larger and busy parishes there may also be a Coordinator who is responsible to the parish priest for recruitment, authorisation documents, convening meetings and planning classes.

The Archdiocese provides training

The Archdiocese has appointed representatives to the Department of Education and is also represented on various special committees, such as the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools.

Around 2007, St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College was given responsibility for training teachers and will assist in the implementation of Special Religious Education in State Schools.

This initiative had the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos and since that time the Advisory Committee on Teaching Religion in State Schools reports to the Chancellor of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia.

The Chancellor is formally accountable to the State Government for the Greek Orthodox Special Religious Education in New South Wales.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Archdiocese commenced the Basic Accreditation Course in 2008. It is offered freely. It also offers additional advanced training.

The Basic Accreditation Course covers details of lesson planning, classroom organisation, teaching methods, child/teenager development, an introduction to the Orthodox Christian faith and elements of spirituality.

Basic Accreditation Course

As a first step it is essential for all beginning school catechists attend a Basic Accreditation Course. The general outline of the course is listed below.

Basic Accreditation Courses - 2022

Session 1 - Administration

Authorisation to teach

Code of conduct, child protection and mandatory reporting

Handling controversial issues and managing a group

Teaching special religious education

The curriculum

Using the lesson plans and resources

Demonstration lessons

Q&A session

The remaining sections of this manual will deal with the basic requirements of Special Religious Education and the fundamentals of teaching religion in a classroom.

At the end of each section there are some questions for you to answer. Answer the questions in writing or if it is easier orally. You may write down your answers or you can discuss the answers with your group.

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Questions

Check your answers with the trainer for the course or your co-ordinator before progressing to the next unit.

1. What is the mission of the Church?
2. What is the formal name for Scripture in State Schools?
3. Who is responsible for authorising teachers in your parish?

If you are undertaking this course by self-study then email your responses to sregreekorthodox@gmail.com



AUTHORISATION TO TEACH¹



This section deals with some of the rights, roles and responsibilities of special religious educators in State Schools.

A starting point is to consider some legal requirements. The first of these is the law that allows us to provide this program in schools.

Education Act

The *Education Act 1990* makes the following provisions for religious education of children in New South Wales government schools. Here is a section from that law:

Special Religious Education

32. (1) In every government school, time is to be allowed for the religious education of children of any religious persuasion, but the total number of hours so allowed in a year is not to exceed, for each child, the number of school weeks in the year.

(2) The religious education to be given to children of any religious persuasion is to be given by a member of the clergy or other religious teacher of that persuasion authorised by the religious body to which the member of the clergy or other religious teacher belongs.

(3) The religious education to be given is in every case to be the religious education authorised by the religious body to which the member of the clergy or other religious teacher belongs.

(4) The times at which religious education is to be given to children of a particular religious persuasion are to be fixed by agreement between the principal of the school and the local member of the clergy or other religious teacher of that persuasion.

(5) Children attending a religious education class are to be separated from other children at the school while the class is held.

¹ These details and those in the following sections are taken in large part from the Handbook of ICCOREIS. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia is a member of ICCOREIS which stands for the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (New South Wales) Inc.

(6) If the relevant member of the clergy or religious teacher fails to attend the school at the appointed time, the children are to be appropriately cared for at the school during the period set aside for religious education.

Objection to religious education

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

The Department of Education's Special Religious Education Procedures are available online for the school community and other interested members of the public. The procedures provide guidelines for the delivery of Special Religious Education in government schools.



The second aspect that is important is your authorisation to teach scripture.

No person may teach Special Religious Education in a New South Wales Department of Education school without formal authorisation of a denomination approved by the Department of Education.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese is an approved provider.

THE SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA

The Archdiocese is required to provide details of its Special Religious Education program to the public. The details about its program are listed on the Archdiocese web-site under NSW Scripture Classes at <http://www.greekorthodox.org.au>

Authorised school catechists

The *Education Act 1990* states that: "The religious education to be given to children of any religious persuasion is to be given by a member of the clergy or other religious teacher of that persuasion authorised by the religious body to which the member of the clergy or other religious teacher belongs".

Every Special Religious Education teacher, and anyone who accompanies the Special Religious Education teacher into the school precincts, must be authorised.

Even though a helper may not do any teaching, the person is still regarded as a Special Religious Education teacher.

Benefits of authorisation

Although it might seem to be a major undertaking to make sure that every Special Religious Education teacher is authorised, this approach is simple if it is handled at the parish level.

It has a number of benefits:


- it encourages parishes to support those they authorise to teach on their behalf;
- it helps the school to know that Special Religious Education teachers are representing recognised churches;

- authorisation helps to ensure that the school, the parishes, the priest and the school catechists are aware of their responsibilities;
- authorisation attempts to ensure that parental wishes are met;
- authorisation also protects the interests of the churches with regard to insurance matters;
- the authorisation is renewable and subject to review. The parish priest can revoke authorisation;
- schools ask for verification of authorisation and it is provided through a letter to schools (further details below). A sample of this letter is provided in Attachment A;

Notifying the School about Authorised Special Religious Education Teachers

At the start of each school year, the parish priest or other religious education coordinator should supply the school with a written list of the teachers authorised by that denomination for Special Religious Education teaching in that school.

An outline of this letter is shown in Attachment A and can be downloaded from the web-site of the Archdiocese under the heading Teacher Resource Form B.

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA  AUTHORISATION CERTIFICATE SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION		_____ is hereby authorised to teach Special Religious Education Classes on behalf of the Greek Orthodox Parish of _____ in the school(s) listed below: _____ _____ _____
NAME: _____ I commit myself to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value the dignity of each child Prepare my lessons to the best of my ability Attend classes regularly and punctually Participate in teacher training Observe the instructions of the School Authorities Follow the directions of the Parish Priest Signed _____ Date _____	_____ using the approved curriculum and has completed a Working with Children Check No. _____ Clearance valid until __/__/____ This authority is valid unless revoked by the Parish Priest Parish Priest _____ Date _____ Tel : _____	
TO BE RETURNED TO YOUR PARISH PRIEST WHEN YOU CEASE BEING A TEACHER IN THIS PARISH Greek Orthodox Archdiocese: (02) 9690 6100		

The above blue Authorisation Card is issued to every person authorised by a parish to be a Special Religious Education teacher, a helper for a Special Religious Education teacher or a relief Special Religious Education teacher. This card is available through the parish and supplies are available through the bookstore of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese.

In addition, it is now required that Authorised Greek Orthodox Scripture Teachers on school sites will display their name and the name of the approved provider on a badge at all times. A sample name tag is shown below:-



Authority to be in the School

All voluntary Special Religious Education teachers, and anyone who accompanies them into a school for Special Religious Education, must:

- obtain a blue identification card to show that they are an authorised Special Religious Education teacher. This card must be carried when visiting the school.
- Also carry some photo ID with you (such as a driver's licence)
- Wear a name tag to show that you are a Greek Orthodox Scripture Teacher.

To summarise the parish priest must authorise every Scripture teacher.

-oOo-

Activities

Make sure that you complete these activities before proceeding to the next section.

1. Obtain the Working with Children authorisation (see later in this booklet). Give the Working with Children Check number to your Parish Priest.
2. Obtain a copy of the Blue Authorisation Card and have it signed by the Parish Priest. A photocopy may be used as a temporary card.

Questions

Now answer these five questions before proceeding further. Check your answers with your trainer or your coordinator. Do not proceed to the next unit until these questions have been answered satisfactorily.

1. Which Act of Parliament allows the religious education of children in New South Wales government schools?
2. If anyone comes with the school catechist into a school (even if they do not teach), do they also need to be authorised?
3. What authorisation must be obtained by the teacher to show that they are not a prohibited person under the child protection legislation?
4. Do you need to obtain a blue identification card to show that you are an authorised Special Religious Education teacher? Yes or No?

5. Do you need to carry some photo ID with you (such as a driver's licence)? Yes or No?
6. Do you need to wear a name tag to show that you are a Greek Orthodox Scripture Teacher? Yes or No?
7. Must the letter in Form B be provided to the Principal of the School from the Parish (Coordinator or Priest)? Yes or No?
8. What are some of the privileges of being a Scripture teacher?
9. What are some of the responsibilities of being a Scripture teacher?

If you are undertaking this course by self-study then email your responses to sregreekorthodox@gmail.com



ATTACHMENT A: THE FIRST SECTION OF THE AUTHORISATION LETTER

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

GO FORM B

Authorisation Letter

Approved Provider of Special Religious Education (SRE)/Special Education in Ethics (SEE)

Provider Details	
Approved Provider	Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
Approved Provider Website	http://www.greekorthodox.org.au/?page_id=3854
Religious Persuasion (If applicable)	Greek Orthodox
Church	
Coordinator	
Contact Phone Number	
Email	
Name of Authorised Curriculum	Christ in Our Midst
Curriculum Website	https://pantanassamonastery.org/scripture-lessons/
Location Details	
School	
Principal	

I declare, as the coordinator for the Approved Provider, that:

1. The listed worker/s have been authorised to teach SRE/SEE and have completed the authorisation process in line with the department's SRE/SEE procedures and annual assurance process.
2. We will comply with all legislative requirements relating to the protection of children and young people from abuse and neglect, including the requirements for a valid and current Working With Children Check (WWCC) clearance for all workers (paid and unpaid) engaged in child-related work.
3. We have verified the Working With Children Check (WWCC) clearance number of all workers (paid and unpaid) listed below who are required to obtain the check.

4. We will undertake to update this advice with the information of any new workers (paid and unpaid) who become engaged by the organisation.
5. We will immediately notify the Department of Education if we receive advice from the Office of the Children's Guardian that one of our employees' WWCC clearance EXPIRES, has been CLOSED or becomes BARRED from working with children.
6. Authorised SRE/SEE workers on school sites will display their name and the name of the approved provider on a badge at all times.

I am aware that providing false or misleading information in this document may lead to the Department:

- withdrawing any offer of engagement that it has made to me or my approved provider; or
- terminating my engagement, or taking disciplinary action; and
- consider any false or misleading information I provide, when considering any future applications by me or my approved provider for engagement.

List of workers

First Name	Last Name	Date of Birth

Signature:	Date:
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THE REMAINING SECTIONS OF THIS AUTHORISATION LETTER ARE NOT SHOWN - THEY ARE COMPLETED BY THE SCHOOL'S OFFICE

CHILD PROTECTION



A second piece of important legislation for school catechists has to do with child protection. The Department of Education writes to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia each year to obtain an assurance that it satisfies the requirements for Special Religious Education.

This includes the requirements of the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012.

This section of the Basic Accreditation course is important. It is more than meeting the requirements of the law. It is about teaching in a way that is consistent with our faith. It is also about good teaching and classroom management. It places the welfare of the child and young person at the centre of special religious education.

We expect every catechist to undergo child protection awareness training and re-training every year. Some of the following notes are taken directly from Department of Education and Communities, *Child Protection Awareness Training*.

Your role

Your role is to:

- be aware of the indicators of harm
- report concerns about the risk of harm to your principal
- fulfil your duty of care to children and young people within your role
- provide support to children and young people as appropriate to your role
- plan for a safe environment for all your activities
- participate in relevant child protection professional learning.

Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012

The Act requires a person whose duties primarily involve direct and unsupervised contact with children and young people to have working with children check clearances.

- a child is a person under the age of 16 years
- a young person is aged 16 or 17 years
- working means as a volunteer
- working includes as a priest or other spiritual officer of a religion
- child-related work involves direct contact with children (e.g., education, religious services)
- direct contact means face to face contact

You must not engage in child-related work unless you hold a working with children check clearance. There is a maximum penalty.

The Working with Children Check lasts for five years.

There are two types of working with children check clearances. We are concerned only with volunteers. A volunteer may engage in paid child-related work if that person has been engaged in that work for a period of 30 consecutive days or less.

Any employees or non-volunteers who engage in paid child-related work should contact their parish priest directly. This is handled separately.

Please ensure that you have obtained a Working with Children Check before you start teaching.

The Department of Education requirement goes beyond the statutory requirements.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese will not authorize, as a teacher of Special Religious Education, any person who has a criminal conviction for:

- a crime against a minor;
- violence;
- assault; or
- providing prohibited drugs.

Authorised teachers must satisfy the conditions for child protection. Here are the steps involved.

All Scripture Teachers are required by Law to complete a Working with Children Check. When Scripture Teachers are unpaid volunteers, there is no charge for this check to be carried out.

- 1. The form can only be accessed on line at <https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-organisations/working-with-children-check/apply/apply>**
- 2. Once Scripture Teachers have completed the on-line form, they will be given a Receipt number**
- 3. They are required to print this receipt and then go to their nearest RMS (previously RTA) Office and hand in that Receipt number with some form of photo ID such as a driver's licence or passport**
- 4. Within 48 hours, they will be emailed a letter of authorisation.**
- 5. Every Scripture Teacher is required to provide a copy of their Working with Children letter to the Parish Priest. The number from this letter will be recorded on their new blue Authorisation Card. This becomes the IDENTITY CARD that is required by the Department of Education.**
- 6. The Working with Children Check number will be supplied by the parish to the Archdiocese. The Archdiocese then verifies this with the Office of the Children's Guardian. This is done for you.**

We use these Basic Accreditation Workshops to put in place a process to prepare teachers.

We also use these workshops answer questions on child protection training to existing and newly authorised teachers of Special Religious Education.

We emphasise this because we have a responsibility to the children; we need to reassure parents; and as mentioned already the Department of Education seeks a written assurance from the Archdiocese that these processes are in place for the coming school year.

Your behaviour

Special Religious Education teachers need to be particularly careful to ensure that their own behaviour at all times is moral and exemplary.

To minimise the chance of any allegations being made against a Special Religious Education teacher for impropriety or another form of unacceptable behaviour, the following guidelines should be noted:

- avoid physical contact with children;
- always make sure that you are in the view of others when talking with only one or two children
- avoid relatively secluded places;

- distinguish between the normal boundaries of teacher/pupil relationships and those that move beyond those boundaries; and
- ensure that levels of affection remain within normal boundaries.

Again, all voluntary Special Religious Education teachers, and anyone who accompanies them into a school for Special Religious Education, must:

- obtain a *Working with Children Check* to indicate that they are not a prohibited person under the child protection legislation.

What is reportable conduct?

There are now mandatory reporting responsibilities for suspecting that any child is at risk of significant harm. These are summarised in Attachment A at the end of this section.

If you have any concerns about a child being at risk or harm, then it might be wise to discuss them with the school. Depending on the nature or the seriousness of the concern then it must be reported by the parish priest to the relevant authorities. This is a legal requirement. You are not authorised to deal with these special issues. Do not delay.

Under the *NSW Ombudsman Act 1974* reportable conduct means:

- any sexual offence, or sexual misconduct, committed against, with or in the presence of a child (including a child pornography offence)
- any assault, ill-treatment or neglect of a child
- any behaviour that causes psychological harm to a child, whether or not, in any case, with the consent of the child.

Indicators of risk of harm

- basic physical or psychological needs are not being met
- the child or young person has not received necessary medical care
- the child or young person is at risk of educational neglect
- the child or young person has been, or is at risk of being physically or sexually abused or ill-treated
- the child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm
- a parent or other caregiver has behaved in such a way towards the child or young person that the child or young person has suffered serious psychological harm
- the child or young person is at risk of cumulative harm, when abusive and/or negative behaviour form a pattern that is repeated over time.

Remember

It is important to remember that child abuse is a crime and that adults have a responsibility to protect children and young people.

Some statements are typically used as a means to discount the seriousness of actual or potential harm to children and young people. Adults and workers often use these statements to give themselves permission not to get involved in protecting a child or young person.

Statements which discount the seriousness of child abuse	
Rationalisation of personal experiences of abuse	<p>'This happened to me too, but it didn't do me any harm. I really deserved it at the time.'</p> <p>'I've done something like this too. Does this make me an abuser?'</p>
Definition of abuse	'This situation is not very good but it isn't actually abuse.'
Worker's distress leads to denial	'This is too horrible to think about.'
Parent focus	'S/he really loves them, but is under so much stress.'
Culture	'Parents are entitled to discipline as they see fit. It's not up to me to judge.'
Attitudes to children and young people	<p>'This is just a very naughty, provocative child.'</p> <p>'Adolescents are always difficult and need strict discipline.'</p>
Trivialising the effects on the child or young person	<p>'It's not that bad – she'll have forgotten all about it by dinner time.'</p> <p>'It's normal for children to go through this.'</p>
Racism and stereotyping	'All Kooris/Greeks do this. It's normal for them.'
Class stereotypes	<p>'But this is a respectable family.'</p> <p>'This is what you can expect from disadvantaged families.'</p>
Worker's inexperience, lack of information and support	'I know it's pretty terrible, but what can I do about it?'
Workload stress	'If I define this one as abuse then I'll open a Pandora's box.'
'Professional' distance	<p>'This isn't my business.'</p> <p>'I'm not trained to deal with this.'</p>
Needs of the system taking precedence over needs of the child or young person	'This child is already creating too many problems.'
Defeatism	'The damage is already done, and intervention will distress the family and may make it even worse.'

A child-focused response to disclosure

If a child or young person discloses directly to you that he or she is being abused, it is important:

- to listen to the child or young person and acknowledge that it is hard to talk about what is happening to him or her

- to be aware of the child or young person's cultural and linguistic background and how this might impact on disclosure
- to be aware of your own emotions in relation to what the child or young person is telling you, and keep those emotions under control
- to be prepared to listen and support a child or young person when he or she tells you about an event or behaviours that indicate risk of harm
- not to draw conclusions, engage others in discussion, ask probing questions, accuse parents/carers or discuss the circumstances of the disclosure with parents or carers
- to use a calm reassuring tone and talk at the child or young person's level
- to tell the child or young person you believe him or her
- not to make promises you cannot keep – especially that you won't tell anyone
- to offer support to the child or young person
- to avoid expressing doubt, judgment or shock
- to trust your judgment and translate your concern into action – think of the child or young person.

There are some important messages that you need to give the child or young person at the time of disclosure. They are:

- that it is not his or her fault; it is never the child or young person's fault
- that it was right to tell – "I am glad you told me"
- that other children have been in this situation; he or she is not alone
- that it is not acceptable for adults to harm children or young people – no matter what.

It is also important to tell the child or young person that you will need to talk to other people whose job it is to help children and young people to be safe.

There is far more to this section and you are asked to now complete the **Child Protection Awareness Training** as part of this Basic Accreditation Course. It is provided in the training resources on the Teacher Resources page of the NSW Scripture classes web-site (GO7). All volunteers need to complete this course.

This is also available freely on request as a separate PowerPoint presentation.

Finally, we have provided you with a professional code of conduct for Scripture Teachers. This summarises many of the details related to Duty of Care and matters listed in the previous sections. Read this and check that we comply with all these requirements.



**GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA
PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR SCRIPTURE TEACHERS
DUTY OF CARE**

Introduction

As a Scripture Teacher we are regarded in some ways as a Department of Education employee.

We are expected to always behave in ways that promote the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people.

We must actively seek to prevent harm to children and young people, and to support those who have been harmed.

Punishment

We must not impose physical punishment on a student in the course of our professional duties

Relationship

We must not develop a relationship with any student that is, or that can be misinterpreted as having a personal rather than a professional interest in a student.

Compromising your relationship

Our professional relationship may be compromised if we:

- invite students to join our personal electronic social networking site or accept students' invitations to join theirs
- attend parties or socialise with students
- invite a student or students back to our home or attend theirs without an appropriate professional reason and without the consent of their parent or carer.
- transport a school student in our car without prior approval from a supervisor and a parent or carer

Boundaries

The boundaries of the professional relationship will be breached if we:

- hold conversations of an intimately personal nature, where we disclose private information about our self
- have contact with a student via written or electronic means including email, letters, telephone, text messages or chat lines, without a valid context
- give students gifts of a personal nature that encourages them to think they have an individual and special relationship with us.

Summary

- Conduct ourselves in a caring but professional manner at all times.
- If anything is disclosed of a private and concerning matter, it must be reported to the school Principal or Deputy Principal. It is not our role to solve the issue and it must remain confidential.

Activities

Make sure that you complete or organise to complete this activity before proceeding to the next section. Both activities are compulsory.

1. If you have not already done so, then please provide details of your Working with Children Check number to your Parish Priest.
2. Complete the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese accredited program for Child Protection Awareness Training before proceeding to the next unit. This program is offered as a self-study part of this basic accreditation; or complete the Child Protection course offered by the Department of Education

Questions

Now answer these six questions before proceeding further. Check your answers with your trainer or your coordinator. Do not proceed to the next unit until these questions have been answered satisfactorily.

1. What is your Working with Children Check number?
2. Who cannot be authorised as a teacher of Special Religious Education?
3. Is it allowed to have physical contact with children?
4. What must you ensure when talking with only one or two children?
5. How should affection to children be expressed?
6. Are visitors to a school required to have a Working with Children Check?
7. Does a Scripture Teacher have a responsibility to report any concern for a child who is at risk? Yes or No?

If you are undertaking this course by self-study then email your responses to sregreekorthodox@gmail.com



ATTACHMENT A

NSW Department of Education

Mandatory reporting responsibilities of Special Religious Education teachers

On 1 March, 2020, mandatory reporter groups in NSW expanded to also include a person providing religion based activities to children (e.g. priest, Scripture teacher).

Is a Scripture Teacher a mandatory reporter if a child is at risk of significant harm?

Answer – Yes. It is the duty of the person to report, as soon as practicable, to the Department of Communities and Justice, the name, or a description, of the child and the grounds for suspecting that the child is at risk of significant harm.

What happens if a Scripture teacher has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm, and those grounds arise during the course of or from the Scripture teaching?

Answer – there are two steps

Step 1. The Department requires Scripture teachers to report to the school principal in line with the Department's Child Protection Policy: <https://policies.education.nsw.gov.au/policy-library/policies/child-protection-policy-responding-to-and-reporting-students-at-risk-of-harm>.

Step 2. Scripture Teachers must report their concern through their parish priest or coordinator to the Archdiocese and seek the advice of the Archdiocese on how to report the concerns under the Act.

Mandatory reporters make a report by calling the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111 or by eReport through the ChildStory Reporter website:
<https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/article/How-to-create-an-eReport-in-the-Reporter-Community>.

Would the Scripture Teacher meet all their obligation if they report any risk of significant harm concerns only to the principal?

Answer – No. As Scripture Teachers are not employees of the Department of Education, they will not meet all their obligations if they report any risk of significant harm to the principal.

Adapted from Paul Wood, Acting Director Literacy and Numeracy Department of Education

ARRANGEMENTS FOR SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



As far as government schools are concerned, Special Religious Education should be organised by negotiation between the principal of the school and the parish priest.

The *Education Act 1990* states that: "In every government school, time is to be allowed for the religious education of children of any religious persuasion, but the total number of hours so allowed in a year is not to exceed, for each child, the number of school weeks in the year".

In most primary schools Special Religious Education periods are 30 minutes in duration per week.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR SCRIPTURE

Please consider the following when making general arrangements with a government school to conduct Scripture classes:

- approaches to the school to introduce Special Religious Education where there has been none in the past are best made early in Term 3 of the year preceding. This is absolutely essential for secondary Special Religious Education where limited flexibility exists once the timetable has been constructed.
- the final arrangement is to be by agreement between the school principal and all providers;
- students not attending Special Religious Education are cared for by the school. They are not the responsibility of Special Religious Education teachers;
- if agreement cannot be reached, the matter should be referred by the Parish Priest to the Regional Coordinator for Special Religious Education. The Archdiocese representative on religious education (Fr Constantine Varipatis) might also be informed before referral to the regional coordinator.

Timetable Arrangements

Special Religious Education is not to be in competition with scheduled lessons.

Timetabling is to be organised so that attendance at Special Religious Education is not inhibited.

Placing Special Religious Education at the beginning or end of the day and allowing non-participating students to arrive late or to leave early is not consistent with the Director-General's memorandum.

Enrolment at school

This list of pupils for Scripture comes from the school. At enrolment, the parents select the Special Religious Education class for their son or daughter. There are five issues that relate to school catechists:

- Greek Orthodox parents should also be informed by the parish that other religions are not a valid substitute for Orthodoxy;
- it is preferable that students who do not attend Scripture are supervised by the school and can work independently on homework, reading or private study depending on the availability of rooms and supervision. This is the policy of the Education Department;
- parents should be encouraged to advise the parish if there is no Scripture Teacher available;
- parents have the right at any time to change their Scripture class nomination or to withdraw their child from scripture lessons. A note to the Principal is enough to bring about this change; and
- at each school, Scripture Teachers should be provided with a class list of the names of students.

OVERCOMING PROBLEMS

Experience has shown that many of the problems arising in Special Religious Education could have been overcome by more careful attention to consultation and communication between churches and schools.

Problems usually take one or more of the following forms:

Problem	Remedy
Inadequate consultation over the timetabling of Special Religious Education or the provision of accommodation.	Commence negotiations with the school no later than the start of Term 3 of the year prior to that in which changes are to be made. Flexibility is essential.
Inadequate staffing of Special Religious Education classes	Close liaison between the parish Special Religious Education Coordinator and the school will alert the churches to potential problems. Inability to staff weekly classes should be addressed in advance so that a different pattern of Special Religious Education can be developed.
Poor classroom management by Special Religious Education teachers	Careful selection of Special Religious Education teachers, proper pre-service training, confidence building by assigning a mentor, ability to observe classroom teachers in action and ongoing in-service training are all important factors in ensuring sound educational practice.
Lack of strategic planning for the coming year or for new school development	Attention to community development, consultation with the Department of Education and Training staff, and developing a church's vision for Special Religious Education

The selection, appointment and authorisation of Special Religious Education teachers are the responsibility of the individual parish.

A sufficient number of teachers is essential. Please advise the Archdiocese if you encounter problems.

DIFFERENT PATTERNS FOR SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Weekly Class Groups

At the infants, primary and junior secondary levels, Special Religious Education is offered through weekly classes because it features regular contact and systematic teaching. There is an opportunity for close interpersonal relationships. This is the way it is described by one teacher:

I have been teaching for approximately 3 ½ years as a school catechist at public school. I currently teach all grades, from Kindergarten to Grade Six. My interest in teaching the Orthodox Faith gives me great satisfaction knowing that children are learning about Christ and their faith – Orthodoxy.

I attend Public School every Friday as the designated Greek Orthodox School catechist. The curriculum material I use in the classroom is as compiled by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia. I have also created my own individual teaching resource to support the curriculum.

The students range from 5 to 12 years and include both boys and girls; there are 31 students comprised of Greek, Serbian and Russian nationalities in my current classes....

Block Teaching

Instead of a weekly period, Special Religious Education lessons can be timetabled to occupy blocks of time approximately equivalent to a year of weekly lessons. Lessons might occur on consecutive days, for one week twice a term, or for two weeks in succession. Other variations include half-day blocks taught three times during a term.

One Term a Year

When there are a limited number of Special Religious Education teachers, students in one year group could have Special Religious Education once a week for one term. Special Religious Education could be provided for a different term for each year group.

Seminars, Conferences and One-day Programs

This approach may be incorporated in a regular program of seminars, conferences and other learning experiences organised for Years 11 and 12.

Combined Arrangements for Special Religious Education

Some churches cooperate among themselves and with other religious persuasions about Scripture. We do not agree that combined classes are suitable for Orthodox students.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia does not agree to deliver Special Religious Education by adopting a combined group arrangement.

FOLLOW SCHOOL PROCEDURES

As a visitor to the local, government school, the catechist should:

- ensure that the children are safe and happy
- ensure that the procedures of the school are maintained;
- teach with sensitivity;
- adopt normal practices and courtesies expected of all teaching staff in the local schools;
- be familiar with the Department of Education directions on classroom management and discipline as this helps to improve lesson quality;
- become familiar with the school welfare, discipline and other policies relevant to the Special Religious Education teacher;
- refer to class teachers to find out what is to be expected of children's conduct;
- enquire if any children have special learning difficulties by consulting their normal class teacher;
- be available for contact with parents concerning Special Religious Education;
- avoid counselling children for emotional problems.

Routine matters

Attention needs to be given to routine matters including:

- being prompt for lessons;
- giving sufficient notice to the school and the parish priest if unable to attend;

- marking the roll each lesson (where this is a school requirement) and reporting absences to the class teacher; and
- never leaving a class unsupervised, including at the end of a lesson.
- finding out, from the School's Special Religious Education Coordinator, what to do if a child has to be sent from class;
- finding out what to do if a child has an accident.

PLEASE NOTE THAT IT CAN BE DANGEROUS TO REWARD CHILDREN WITH LOLLIES OR OTHER FOOD ITEMS DUE TO SERIOUS ALLERGIES. IT IS NOT PERMITTED.

- **This can cause a medical emergency.**
- **There are no exceptions.**

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Activities

Make sure that you organise to complete the first activity. The second activity is optional.

1. Obtain a copy of the emergency procedures for your school
2. (Optional) The Australian Society for Clinical Immunology and Allergy has developed an online training program for school services staff where face to face training is not possible (or feasible). Go to: <https://etraining.allergy.org.au/> You enrol for the course as a volunteer in State Schools <https://etraining.allergy.org.au/enrol/index.php?id=47>

Questions

Now answer these eight questions before proceeding further. Check your answers with your trainer or your coordinator. Do not proceed to the next unit until these questions have been answered satisfactorily.

1. Who arranges Scripture with the principal of the school?
2. How much time is allowed for Scripture?
3. In which school terms should schools be approached to introduce Scripture?
4. Are students who do not attend Scripture classes also the responsibility of the School catechist?
5. Are other religions a substitute for Orthodoxy?
6. Do parents have a right to withdraw their child from a scripture class?
7. What routine matters need attention from a School catechist?
8. Are Scripture teachers allowed to reward children with lollies or other food items? Give reasons for your answer.

If you are undertaking this course by self-study then email your responses to sregreekorthodox@gmail.com



AUTHORISING THE CURRICULUM



Section 15.8.C (c) of the *School Manual on Educational Management* reads as follows: “It is the responsibility of the approved religious persuasion to: authorise materials and pedagogy used by Special Religious Education teachers, and provide information about the content of lessons when requested by parents”.

Curriculum material for religious education

The Archdiocese has responded to the above requirements by developing or endorsing a curriculum appropriate to the needs of infants, primary or high school pupils. This curriculum lists the topics that will be covered.

The program was developed at great effort by the Holy Monastery of Pantanassa. It has been reviewed and updated for 2023.

The program that we follow is based on a *Mixed Themes Curriculum*. The Mixed Themes Curriculum was introduced some years ago to provide variety to the lessons.

There are three stages for infants, four stages for primary and four stages for high school.

By and large this program is comprehensive and we are fortunate to have it available.

At the very least it provides a basic outline of topics to follow in your teaching. It is complemented by a series of workbooks that are optional for teachers/students to use.

Please note that the curriculum only indicates what topics will be taught. The workbooks that are provided are optional for the students. They are not the teacher's notes.

TOPICS FOR INFANTS STAGE 1 2023

1. <i>Agiasmos</i> in our homes
2. Saint Philothea
3. Do not say Lies
4. Sunday of Orthodoxy
5. All the Children of the World
6. On Sunday we go to Church
7. Our Prayers to Panagia
8. The Last Supper
9. Easter
10. My Name Day
11. Adam and Eve
12. Honour your Father and Mother
13. Moses
14. The Holy Liturgy
15. The Feast Day of our Parish
16. Do not Steal
17. The Holy Vestments
18. The Birth of Saint John the Baptist
19. Saints Peter and Paul
20. The Prosphoro
21. Saint Panteleimon
22. Do not be Jealous
23. Panagia
24. Prayer Before a Meal
25. David and Goliath
26. Keep Sunday Holy
27. My Grandfather
28. The Holy Cross
29. The Monastery
30. Esther
31. The Forty-Day Blessing
32. Zacchaeus
33. The Holy Bible
34. Saint Nectarios
35. God Calls Samuel
36. Saint Katherine
37. The Three Wise Men

Notes

This program is correct at the time of publication and will be updated as required.

The description "Stage 1" is different from the use of the phrase in the Department of Education.

that dates and timing of lessons will vary from school to school depending upon timetables and lesson arrangements and the ecclesiastical calendar.

TOPICS FOR PRIMARY STAGE 2 2023

1.The Three Hierarchs
2.The Ten Lepers
3.Holy Confession
4.The Second Coming
5.Satan Tempts the Lord Jesus Three Times
6.The Church during Turkish rule
7.The Parable of the Ten Maidens
8.GOOD FRIDAY
9.EASTER
10.The Parable of the Great Feast
11The Rich Young Man
12.The Parable of the Mustard Seed
13.The Apostle Peter
14.The Apostle Paul
15.God Cares for Us
16. Paul's First Journey
17.Paul in Greece
18.Paul's Third Journey
19. The Transfiguration of Our Lord Jesus Christ
20.Panagia
21.St John the Baptist to be confirmed
22.The Age of Martyrs
23.Elevation of the Holy Cross
24.Saint John the Evangelist
25.The First Martyr
26.The Lord Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant
27.The New Martyrs
28.The First Disciples are Called
29.Our Lord Jesus Christ Walks on the Sea
30.The Parable of the Sower
31.Orthodox Mission Work
32.The Feeding of the Five Thousand
33.The Clergy
34.The Bishop
35.Our Lord Jesus Straightens the Bowed Woman
36.The Shepherds
37.The Three Wise Men

Notes

This program is correct at the time of publication and will be updated as required.

The description "Stage 2" is different from the use of the phrase in the Department of Education.

that dates and timing of lessons will vary from school to school depending upon timetables and lesson arrangements and the ecclesiastical calendar.

TOPICS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STAGE 4 2023

1 Introduction to the History of our Church
2 The Canaanite Woman
3 The Triodion
4 The Prodigal Son
5 St Moses the Ethiopian
6 Great Lent
7 Sunday of Orthodoxy
8 The Feast of the Annunciation
9 The Holy Cross
10 Craft – Easter Kolouria/Red eggs
11 Easter
12 Thomas Sunday
13 The Myrrh Bearing Women
14 Saint Constantine
15 The Samaritan Woman
16 Pentecost
17 The Early Church in Jerusalem
18 St Peter in the early church
19 St Paul's Journeys
20 The Age of Martyrs
21 The First Ecumenical Council
22 Early Monasticism
23 The Transfiguration of Our Lord
24 Panagia
25 The 2 nd -7 th Ecumenical Council
26 Saint John the Baptist
27 Conversion of the Slavs
28 Elevation of the Holy Cross
29 The Great Schism
30, St John the Theologian
31 Fall of Constantinople
32 The Russian revolution and the Church
33 The Asia Minor Catastrophe
34 Orthodox missions around the world
35 Orthodoxy in Australia
36 Monasticism today
37 St Katherine
38 Craft -Bookmark
39. Recent saints of our Church
40. Christmas

Notes

This program is correct at the time of publication and will be updated as required.

The description "Stage 2" is different from the use of the phrase in the Department of Education.

that dates and timing of lessons will vary from school to school depending upon timetables and lesson arrangements and the ecclesiastical calendar.

Previously there was some variation between parishes in the curriculum that is being used. From 2014, teachers have been supported to adopt a standard curriculum.

Authorisation

You may not be aware that the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese is required to notify the central office of the Department of Education of the authorised curriculum and to make it available to parents.

The Archdiocese provides details of its Special Religious Education program to the public on the Scripture Resources tab and through the Pantanassa Monastery web-site.

Teachers are not permitted to teach unauthorised topics.

The presentation of the topic may be varied to suit teaching arrangements.

Content must be adapted to the level of the learner.

Topics may be brought forward to suit the Church Calendar.

The list of topics is non-negotiable.

The program is issued each year and reviewed every three years (Infants) or four years (Primary, High School)



Pantanassa Monastery Scripture Lessons

This section provides some background on the materials we use.²

Pantanassa Monastery (previously, Holy Monastery of the Transfiguration of our Lord) has produced the curriculum for Orthodox Special Religious Education classes. The Monastery has coordinated this major project for over 30 years.

Theologians, teachers, Sunday school teachers, graphic artists and IT persons have been involved. Currently the curriculum amounts to over 1000 pages and covers K-12. There are over 500 lessons; it is a very comprehensive program.

² There is a more detailed explanation of the curriculum and this is available on request.

Care has been taken to ensure that it is doctrinally acceptable but also educationally sound and suited to the developmental needs and age of the children.

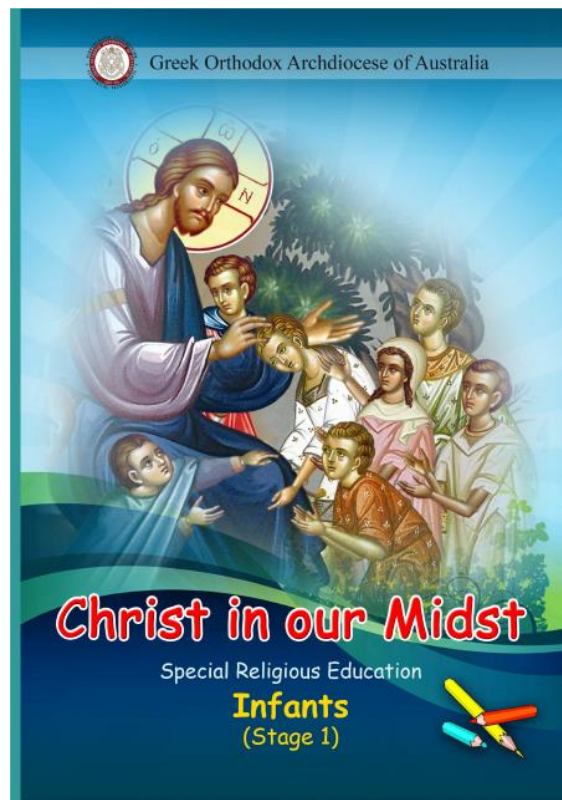
Please advise any problems that you might encounter with the curriculum materials so that changes can be made. The Scripture Lessons are available through your parish priest.

The new format for our lessons is called “Christ in our Midst”. Stage 1 for Infants and Primary was released in December 2013. In 2023 we will be using Stage 1 Infants and Stage 2 Primary.

The workbooks continue to be based on a three-year program for Infants (K-2), a four-year cycle for Primary (3-6) and separate units for high school. They are revised continuously.

2023	Stage 1 Infants	Stage 2 Primary	Stage 4 High school
2024	Stage 2 Infants	Stage 3 Primary	Stage 1 High school
2025	Stage 3 Infants	Stage 4 Primary	Stage 2 High school

Teachers are reminded that they are not obligated to use the workbooks but the topics in the curriculum are mandatory.



USING THE MIXED THEMES CURRICULUM

How to use these materials

Any religious education materials must be used with care and delicacy for the spiritual education of our children.

The following points may be helpful:

1. This curriculum is meant to provide teachers with a structured program. There is a sequence of lessons Infants, Primary and High School that cover all the most important topics.
2. The program provides an outline of the topics to be covered in each year.
3. There are sufficient lessons for a full school year.
4. The program is flexible enough to allow you to vary the order of lessons for important feast days and for Easter, the Dormition and for patron saints.
5. The curriculum is designed to save teachers the problem of having to design their own detailed program.
6. Please note again that the activity sheets for the pupils are not the teaching notes. This is an important point. Teachers should prepare a lesson based on the lesson notes and PowerPoint provide on each topic through Google Classroom. The teacher's notes provide a comprehensive background as well as questions, activities, background information..
7. We encourage teachers to meet monthly amongst themselves or with a parish coordinator to prepare lessons and share ideas on how to best present the material.
8. Please do not alter the teaching material without permission.
9. Please feel free to make any suggestions for improvement; and inform us of any errors or omissions.

Remember that the Archdiocese is required to list its program or curriculum with the Department of Education and to make it available to the public. There are many advantages when we use a common program.

How to deal with mixed classes

You will need to adapt these lessons to the level of understanding of the children. Over a seven-year period you will have covered the entire Infants/Primary curriculum.

If you have an entire combined **Kindergarten right through to Year 6** then the best you can do is to work through the program from the Infants level. It is important to do this so that you will not omit any important topics. The topics are still satisfactory for the older pupils.

What happens if my parish had its own program?

Unfortunately, this is not the authorised curriculum.

The Mixed Curriculum comprises three stages in Infants, four stages in Primary and four stages in high school. There are a series of workbooks to accompany the topics. The workbooks are optional.

The topics specify what is to be taught but the teacher will have discretion in how it is taught.

Scripture Teachers are not allowed to teach whatever they like. It must be an approved program. Additional topics cannot be inserted.

There is also a series of hymns that can be taught at each age level.



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Questions

Now answer these ten questions before proceeding further. Check your answers with your trainer or your coordinator. Do not proceed to the next unit until these questions have been answered satisfactorily.

1. Who authorises the material to be used in Scripture classes?
2. Has a mixed themes curriculum been approved for 2014?
3. Are teachers compelled to use the curriculum?
4. Where can a copy of the curriculum be obtained?
5. Can parishes modify the authorised curriculum for Scripture?
6. Who is authorised to modify the scripture program?
7. What is the purpose of the list of topics in the curriculum?
8. Are the worksheets intended as lesson notes for teachers?
9. What hymns should be taught for Year 4?
10. What hymn should be taught to a group that does not have any previous training?

If you are undertaking this course by self-study then email your responses to sregreekorthodox@gmail.com



THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SESSION



Be Prepared

Every teacher will prepare in a different way depending upon their circumstances. Here is one description from a teacher with four years' experience and who teaches at two primary schools and on a variable basis at one high school:

I am always first in class. I have two icons with me plus a Cross and put them on the blackboard or on the desk if there is any desk available.

When all the children are in the class I ask them to take off their hats. I say to them that now we convert the class into a church and we start with the Holy Spirit prayer usually.

After the prayer I ask them a few questions and after that, what they remember from the previous lesson. After the questions we continue with the new lesson. They do the exercises given and I help them if they need help. Most of the children need help but some do very good work....

- Have everything ready.
- Organise your classroom space. Bring an icon to make your classroom a special space. Display a poster or pictures from a book to make the lesson as inviting as possible to the class. The space should say to the class, "This is a special place to be."
- Organize your teaching supplies. Whether you store them in a closet, cupboard, or just a cardboard box, be ready for the first few months with the various supplies you will need.
- Map out the year. Look at the calendar, both for the Church year and for your parish's life and map out the various lessons for certain times of the year.

Do Long-Range Planning

- Be sure to check the program for 2023 that you will follow.
- Become familiar with the overall course for the year, not just one lesson at a time;
- Mark particular Holy Days and fast periods to incorporate with your lessons.

- Photocopy and use the planning guide for the year.

Plan Your Sessions

- Make all sessions relevant to the ages of students.
- A good session is the one that is different. People can get bored very easily.
- Have an objective for each session. An objective is a learning outcome that you want to achieve. An example would be to make the sign of the cross, to recite a prayer, to chant a hymn, to know the meaning of a feast.
- Decide what extra materials you might need (maps, art supplies, Bibles)
- Bring displays, posters or other items to the classroom.
- On a small table place a cloth and icon. If possible, add an icon to honour a specific feast day or saint being commemorated at that time.

The religious education session

This is a general outline of a session:

HYMNS/CHANTING/SONGS

OPENING PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

Get your students' attention

- talk about an event
- show a picture
- ask questions
- tell a short story

THE BODY OF THE LESSON

- this is the lesson itself
- outline the main points briefly and simply
- use your own reading to prepare this section
- rehearse it in your own mind during the week

REINFORCEMENT OF LEARNING

- help them to make the message real
- use one of the activity sheets or have them take it home to complete
- use some craft or art if time permits
- use a discussion

CONCLUSION

- What are they going to do about this lesson?
- What can they do during the week to put this into action?

CLOSING PRAYER

GAMES & ACTIVITIES

The session will vary according to the topic and the class. Sometimes the order will be changed to keep the interest of the students. Here is a sample session or lesson plan that shows some more details for you.

A SAMPLE LESSON

Title: *The First Disciples*

Aim(s): *to encourage the children to come to Church on Sunday*
to learn a new song, Ακολουθεί Μοι

Equipment required: *Activity sheets, Cardboard fish with words on them*
Story board posters Words to song
Whiteboard marker, water, container, food colouring, blue tac, brush

Opening Prayer(s): *'In the name of the Father... ', Βασιλεύ Ουράνιε '*

INTRODUCTION

Question: Who has gone fishing ? Tell us about your fishing experiences.

BODY OF THE LESSON

Did you know that the first disciples of Jesus were fishermen ?

Tell story of first disciples using story board posters. Do magic trick. Any questions?

REINFORCEMENT OF LEARNING

Play Game - 'Going fishing' Children to find fish to solve the mystery phrase....

.... 'Our Lord Jesus invites us every Sunday to worship Him in Church 'and/or

Work on Pantanassa activity sheets

CONCLUSION

Sing Ακολουθεί Μοι Give out reward(s) for positive behaviour

Encourage children to ask their parents to take them to Church on Sunday and Sunday School

Closing Prayer(s): *'Αγιος ο Θεός, Πάτερ Ημών*

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER

The following prayers should be said before you begin your lesson.

Begin Prayers with :

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

Glory to you our God, Glory to You!

Prayer to Holy Spirit

Heavenly King, Comforter, the Spirit of Truth,
present everywhere and filling all things,
the treasury of good and giver of life,
come and dwell in us
and cleanse us from every impurity
and save our souls, Gracious One. Amen.



CLOSING PRAYER

The following prayers should be said as you end your lesson.

Trisagion Prayer (in addition to the prayer in the workbook)

Holy God. Holy Mighty. Holy Immortal have mercy on us.(3)

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven,
hallowed be your name.
your Kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
and forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Through the prayers of our holy Fathers,
Lord Jesus Christ our God,
have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

If possible, use mainly the Greek versions of these prayers but do not hesitate to use the English from time to time, especially if you have a combined Orthodox group.

Know Your Students

Get to know the pupils. You teach people not religion. Find out about their interests and what is important to them.

- Chat with students as they come into the classroom. These are precious moments.
- Privately pray for each one of your students by name.

Respect Your Students

As a scripture teach you are a significant person in their lives. How you react to them is very important.

- Listen to them;
- Respect every child.
- Know your students by name as quickly as possible. A name is their identity.
- Let absent students know that you missed them.
- Affirm positive behaviour and work.
- Speak to students with respect, especially when correcting or disciplining them.
- Expect good behaviour.
- Use praise and reinforcement.
- Give positive attention to all students and especially those who need encouragement to improve.
- Act as a model Christian in your behavior (no confrontations, no favoritism or impatience).

Be Aware of How You Communicate

Use simple language appropriate for your students and avoid abstract terms

- Do not use complex metaphors, (e.g., Christ is the Bread of Life)
- Lecturing or telling is boring.
- Use visual materials
- Have some activities that involve students
- Repetition is boring.

Managing a Classroom

Be early to class as many problems begin in an unsupervised classroom and carry over into the class.

- A quick start keeps students on task.
- Direct the entrance, seating and exit of students as appropriate.
- Gain the attention of the whole class before giving general instructions and give them from the front of the room.

- Have only a few classroom rules
- Be consistent. Inconsistency breeds poor discipline.
- Establish the procedures for the beginning and conclusion of the lesson.
- Calmly insist that reasonable standards be met
- Do not tolerate deliberate misbehaviour.
- Busy students do not get into trouble as much as idle ones.
- Have a set of extra activities to be used with students or classes who finish work quickly.
- The whole class should not be penalised for the misbehaviour of a few.

Controversial Topics

- Normally the principal of the school is to be advised when any Special Religious Education programs plan to deal with controversial topics. Our Orthodox curriculum avoids socially controversial topics. The revised curriculum is reviewed and checked by specialists to ensure that all material is relevant for this age group.
- Avoid discussion on any matters relating to death, suicide, illness, sexuality, family matters, politics and law. If students ask questions then they are referred to their parents or the parish priest.
- No counselling of students on controversial issues is permitted – this is a matter for professionals. Please consult the school or the parish priest.
- Please teach only the topics specified in the curriculum. This is a comprehensive curriculum that covers the Orthodox faith.
- Avoid topics that are likely to cause harm or distress. It is better to teach less. We have a responsibility for the souls of these children.

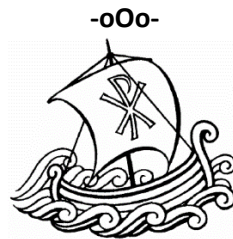
It is not always possible to avoid sensitive or controversial issues with the children in our Scripture classes.³ Typical issues cover death, illness, suffering, heaven-hell, sexuality and marriage. In general, it is recommended we should avoid discussing such topics in Special Religious Education.

Some themes, however, might arise from a lesson in the curriculum. If a child takes the opportunity to raise a real personal concern then it is appropriate to address the issue in a gentle and non-controversial fashion. The table below lists some recommended responses. Do not ignore his/her concern.

³ I am grateful to His Grace Bishop Christodoulos Economou and St Nicholas Parish for their initiative in providing this material.

A simple answer for each theme is suggested below. If the child tries to discuss further, then we should not engage in further discussion and explain that it is not part of our lesson and direct him/her to the parents and the priest for further discussion.

DEATH	If a child is concerned about the death of a loved one, we can just comfort him/her by saying that their loved one is with Jesus Christ. Christ loves everyone so their loved one is happy near Christ.
ILLNESS	To respond to why a loved one is ill, we can say that we do not understand why people become sick, however, we can pray so that God will give their loved one strength to face the difficulty and overcome the problem very quickly.
SUFFERING	This may come up when we have a lesson on a Saint who went through suffering. Or it may come up when we talk about Holy Week and the suffering of Christ for us. We may say that suffering brings the resurrection and eternal life which is a very happy event and therefore the suffering is forgotten quickly.
HEAVEN/HELL	They are only words which describe being in the light of God or being away from the light of God.
MARRIAGE	God gives people the freedom to choose what to do in life. It is a very personal issue and if we choose to follow God then we examine the Bible to find the will of God.



Questions

Now answer these ten questions before proceeding further. Check your answers with your trainer or your coordinator.

1. What is the first step in the Scripture lesson?
2. What are some ways of getting to know your students?
3. How do you show respect to your students?
4. How do you make a lesson relevant to the life of the students?
5. What are the basic parts of a lesson?
6. Why is it important to use simple language when teaching?
7. What three things can be done to avoid problems in supervising a class?

8. Is it recommended that the curriculum deals with controversial topics?
9. Which prayers should be used at the start of a lesson?
10. Which prayers should be used at the end of a lesson?

If you are undertaking this course by self-study then email your responses to sregreekorthodox@gmail.com



STUDENT DEVELOPMENT



In order to maximise student engagement, it is helpful to have a clear idea of the developmental milestones of students in each age group. When a student is positively engaged, they are more inclined to stay on task and have increased attention spans. Their thinking skills improve as well as their understanding of concepts.

The following notes are adapted from the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools and the All Faiths Special Religious Education group.

The following information provides some guidelines of what is typical and appropriate at different age levels. This will assist Scripture teachers with student engagement. The list is not exhaustive. It is important that Scripture teachers get to know the students in their classes as every child is unique and there is a diverse range within any class.

Children aged 5-6 years

Physical Development

- physical activity is an outlet
- sitting is difficult

Cognitive development

- like to paint and draw
- practise skills in order to become better
- understand concept of numbers
- know right and left hands
- can copy complex shapes, such as a diamond
- can understand commands with three separate instructions
- can explain objects and their use
- like to play board games

Social development

- prefer small groups

- identify with others
- individual friendships and loyalties are important
- concern for others
- model adult behaviour
- friendly and affectionate
- begin to understand and appreciate humour
- enjoy tricks and jokes
- difficult to laugh at themselves
- cooperate and share

Emotional development

- enjoy responsibilities and privileges that they can handle
- easily discouraged and has difficulty accepting criticism
- seek praise and encouragement
- respond readily to affection, warmth and a sense of humour
- difficult to accept losing and prefers games that are non-competitive
- tend to dawdle and become upset if hurried
- shy, need encouragement to participate and protection from aggressive children
- sense of safety and belonging is important
- fearful of imaginary creatures

Children aged 7-9 years

Physical development

- enthusiastic about games
- begin to play team sports
- fine motor skills are increasing

Cognitive development

- can count backwards and know the date
- read more and enjoy reading
- understand concept of space
- enjoy collecting objects

Social development

- form close friendships
- tend to become cliquish with 3 to 8 members
- shift in/out of groups on again/off again friendships
- sensitive to what other children and adults think of them
- want to please
- enjoy helping with chores
- like cleaning
- play in a socialised manner
- adhere to game rules rigidly

- able to solve arguments with peers
- Like competition and games

Emotional development

- struggle to become competent and productive members of society
- react poorly to being teased and ridiculed
- difficulty accepting criticism
- more argumentative and spirited
- eager and capable of participating in rule-making
- enjoy competitive games, but keep at reasonable limits with simple rules
- requires support to self-regulate behaviour

Children aged 10-12 years

Physical development

- introduce varied and complicated movement i.e., jumping rope
- can become self-conscious with their body image

Cognitive development

- Like to write letters
- Read well

Social development

- desperately want to "fit in"
- increasing need for peer recognition and approval
- shift from dependency on parents to dependency on peers
- friendships are important. On again/off again relationships are common
- develop loyalty, standing up for each other
- can be insensitive or cruel to others. Need strong adult models of kindness and compassion
- like to discuss social problems
- interested in working on community projects

Emotional development

- adult support is crucial during this period
- seeking independence
- increasing questioning of issues
- need to develop strategies to maintain self-control
- need adults to respect their ability to make sound judgements

Thinking Skills – Keeping it Real

Although, during middle childhood (6 years to 12 years of age), children's ability to think becomes more flexible, their understanding can still be tied to what is real and what they experience.

In order to learn, they still need learning situations that use real materials. New learning situations should be connected to their own past experiences or what they have seen themselves.

Children in middle childhood may still find it difficult to think about abstract ideas. Complex ideas should be presented simply in a straightforward fashion that is consistent with each child's level of development. Note that the ability to use logic develops gradually.

Fortunately, most of our religious education is not complex. The lessons have been trialled over many years to make them accessible to students. In one sense it is easy because it deals with what is true and what is relevant in the life of a student.

MANAGING A GROUP



As school catechists we are not merely teachers during the allocated time for Scripture. We are community representatives to the Department of Education. We are there to share our Orthodox faith with children.

In the Basic Accreditation Course we are trained how to prepare and how to deliver a session. Naturally, if we cannot control the class and get the attention of the children, we will not be able to deliver the session effectively.⁴

Classroom management and controlling a class are skills that we can improve over time. We can get better with experience, as long as we are prepared to look back on each session with the children.

Take a moment to consider how we handled different situations that came up during the previous session and decide if there was a better way of dealing with those situations. We should be prepared to discuss our concerns with other more experienced scripture teachers or the scripture coordinator of our parish. After all, this is a team effort.

It does take effort to create a well-managed classroom. Different types of strategies may work with different types of students. There is no such thing as a perfect recipe to follow that will work with all classes and for all catechists.

⁴ These notes were prepared originally by St Nicholas parish, for the Basic Accreditation Course.

The reward for all this effort is great satisfaction when we help the children gain something from Special Religious Education and learn about our Orthodox faith.

There are some key topics that we can consider and we can examine how to apply them in our classroom situation. We need to ask ourselves the following questions:

- Do I plan the lesson and prepare adequately?
- Do I set up the right environment in the classroom?
- Do I show that I am in control?
- Do I show a good example?
- Do I communicate properly?
- Do I apply strategies appropriate for the group?
- How do I manage challenging behaviour?
- Do I reward and encourage good behaviour?

The first two points are dealt with in an earlier session, so we will start with the third point.

Be in control

If required, revise school rules and set up class rules.

- On the first day make our expectations clear and explain the consequences of breaking the rules.
- Get a copy of the school rules and also go through the class rules, with the children.

Explain clearly to the children why we are there and what we will help them to achieve by the end of the year.

Show natural authority.

Be friendly but firm – adhere to the class rules and consequences.

- Display confidence at all times because children understand body language.
- While waiting for everyone to walk in the room stand straight and address a few children by their name, asking them how they are etc.
- Wait for the children to be quiet before starting the class. Just look at them patiently.
- Stop and glance at the children misbehaving. No need to say anything.

Show a good example

Display Orthodox Christian qualities: be patient, friendly, respectful; do not show anger; keep our voice down. An example is what counts because contemporary children may not listen to words.

- Make children feel safe and comfortable.
- Ensure their behaviour is responsible and no throwing of objects etc.
- Be friendly, give them a smile and have a chat with them.
- Listen to their news but control the time.
- Listen to their concerns and problems.
- Walk around the classroom to make all of them feel part of the group.

- Give them as much personal attention as may be possible.

Communication

Give them specific detailed instructions for example: to push the chair under the desk before the prayer at the end of class; to raise their hand if they want to answer a question or ask a question or just say something.

Talk slowly and clearly especially to the little ones. Talk to them at their level, using simple words and practical examples.

Use variety in your session to deliver the key message – use of technology, chanting, games, role playing. This will foster interest and promote learning.

Use questioning techniques

- To promote interest and encourage learning and understanding, for example, for Holy Week ask them first if they ever walked around the church on Holy Friday night and then start explaining the events and their significance. For the Resurrection engage them in discussion if their family coloured the eggs, bought special candles etc. and then go on to explain.
- Ask revision questions to find out if they understand what we are saying. If they do not understand, they lose concentration and misbehave.
- If someone did something wrong, make them aware of it by asking a question; e.g. if someone threw a pencil, very calmly ask if they would be happy if a child got hurt. By doing this we help the children understand why they should obey the rule not to throw objects.

Give the children a chance to talk and listen to them. Also answer their questions.

Use group structure – older children to help younger ones with activities.

Apply strategies appropriate for the group

Consider the age of the group.

- Their concentration span can be limited;
- The choice of words and how much to tell them; and
- And how to present Orthodoxy as appropriate.

Use variety in the method of delivery: they lose interest if we limit our time to reading and completing the exercises.

Use of technology.

- Usually learning is enhanced by the use of audio-visual material and computers.
- Ask the classroom teacher to set up the smart board if possible.

Activities.

- Choose activities appropriate for them.
- Demonstrations: Use dough to demonstrate how to make *prosforon*; make Palm Sunday crosses etc.

- Choose a relevant story book to read in class.
- Discussion.
- Some older children may benefit from group discussions, prompted by questions which they raise.

How to manage challenging behaviour

Redirect challenging behaviour.

- Address questions to them.
- Give them a responsibility (e.g. collect books, hold up an icon to show to the class).
- Take care of seating arrangement.

Build a positive rapport.

- Instead of embarrassing them, talk to them. They may have individual issues.
- Use a positive approach. Get their trust. Show them that we care. We should not raise our voice at them in front of everyone.
- Explain expectations and remind them their responsibilities as class members.
- Refer the problem to the class teacher or the school SRE coordinator.

Encouragement and reward

Praise all good effort. Use the school merit award system if available and if required.

Set up your own award system: Put a sticker in their book for answering a question correctly or for good behaviour or for improvement. If they do not answer correctly, do not embarrass them but give a chance to someone else to answer correctly by saying: "any other ideas?" Then repeat the correct answer to reinforce it. Do not give the stickers out too easily. We will find that they will try to discipline themselves and participate, in order to get the most stickers.

Try to encourage low achievers by finding something positive about them, in order to occasionally give them a sticker (e.g., for being good listeners; for improvement).

In summary

We should try to create a safe, caring, friendly, respectful and stimulating environment for the children.

It does not really matter how much work we cover. What really matters is to bring the children close to an Orthodox environment, as much as possible, in the classroom situation.

-oOo-

Activities

Make sure that you organise for someone to observe your teaching at least once each year or complete a self-appraisal for your coordinator.

REVIEWING YOUR TEACHING



Reviewing your teaching is about examining what you do in the classroom. It is an important and compulsory part of being a Scripture Teacher in the Greek Orthodox Church.

The Department of Education specifies that the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese should have in place a process of reviewing Scripture Teaching. This requirement applies to all religions.

The Department says that this review of your teaching can include –

- Teacher self-reflection
- Student feedback
- Classroom observation
- Supervisor feedback
- Mentor support
- Adherence to the authorised curriculum.

It might help to examine each of these separately and to see how a teacher can use one of these methods to review their teaching.

Self-reflection

Self-reflection is when you assess yourself. You evaluate your own teaching. You review your effectiveness. You question the way you do things. You examine whether you are efficient and many other aspects.

Of course, it is possible for people to make only positive self-reflections. It is recognised that teachers might be inaccurate in their views of themselves. The self-reflection is considered only one piece of evidence but an important part.

When you add self-reflection to other factors then it can be a useful guide for the teacher themselves. If someone has been teaching for many years; there are no adverse reports from a school; the coordinator is satisfied with their work; and the students seem happy then it is relevant. But we recognise that it is not a perfect answer – information from other sources is needed but realistically it is difficult in a volunteer context.

It does not mean we rely only on self-evaluation but we are also realistic about what can be done. It is a first step in evaluating our teaching.

For this reason, we have developed a form for your self-evaluation and recommend that you complete it annually. Then hand it to your Parish Co-ordinator or Parish Priest. It can be done in Greek or English.

The form we have developed is provided in the appendix to this section.

Student Feedback

Student feedback is another component of evaluating teaching. This is useful but still not perfect. It should be used in conjunction with other information.

It could be a simple survey with several questions such as:

Overall, I enjoyed the Scripture lessons
--

<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree
--

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese has not yet determined the best student feedback form and the best way of collecting such feedback. It would have to be suitable for Infants. It would need to be confidential. The results would need to be secure. The format needs to be relevant to users. These are only some of the issues.

Possibly also a parent feedback form might be possible or better.

Whatever approach is used for student feedback there is still no guarantee that student evaluations are perfect indicators. Otherwise, how can one explain the huge variation in student evaluations of a teacher. The overall average rating, however, is probably a reasonable guide to how well a person is teaching.

Classroom observation

Classroom observation is when a teacher is inspected by another person, ideally someone who is qualified and experienced in Scripture Teaching.

Multiple observations of a teacher during a lesson are a relevant indicator of teaching ability. It is especially useful for the beginning teacher but it is not always possible.

Again, it is not perfect, and still subject to many factors.

Any observation should not be stressful for the Scripture Teacher and should be conducted in an atmosphere of personal development.

A sample form for auditing or observing a teacher is provided in the appendix to this chapter. This can be completed by any observer, such as another teacher or a parish coordinator.

Supervisor feedback

Supervisor feedback occurs when the parish Scripture Coordinator gives advice or makes comments to a teacher about their progress.

The feedback might be on the basis of observation. It might be on the basis of feedback from parents or the school or even the students.

Mentor support

Mentor support is the help that we receive from another Scripture Teacher.

Mentor support is similar to supervisor feedback. It can deal with practical issues about the organisation of teaching or classroom management or administration.

Adherence to the curriculum

Adherence to the curriculum refers to the extent to which a teacher follows the topics listed in the program for each year. It is relatively easy to determine.

It is also relatively easy to see if a teacher is adding material that is not authorised or providing instructional materials that have not been approved.

Annual evaluation of teaching

Each year a teacher should take steps to evaluate their teaching in some way. It is recommended that for the time being our teachers follow whatever process best suits them and their situation.

There is no best way to evaluate teaching but information from many sources over time is probably a good indicator. With feedback and reflection on your own teaching, then it is possible to improve and progress.

We hope that these comments provide you with a start to thinking about evaluating your teaching. Any records of your evaluation will be kept by the parish coordinator or the parish priest.

-oOo-



Questions

Now answer these eight questions before proceeding further. Check your answers with your trainer or your coordinator.

1. What are some different ways of evaluating your teaching?
2. Which method of evaluating your teaching will you use?
3. What two methods are recommended for evaluating teaching in this section?
4. What is self-reflection?
5. Is it necessary to complete your self-evaluation each year?
6. To whom are the results of the self-evaluation handed?
7. Which method of teacher evaluation is recommended for a new teacher?
8. How is annual teacher evaluation useful for a Scripture Teacher?

Activities

Make sure that you organise for someone to observe your teaching at least once each year or complete a self-appraisal for your coordinator.

Ask the coordinator or parish priest to sign the yellow training record. This record can be kept by the parish.

APPENDIX

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE

ANNUAL TEACHER SELF-EVALUATION

ΕΤΗΣΙΑ ΑΞΙΟΛΟΓΗΣΗ ΔΑΣΚΑΛΟΥ

Teacher's name : _____ Date: _____

Parish: _____

School: _____ Class: _____ No of students: _____

Η πρόοδό σας φέτος ήταν: [] φτωχή [] επαρκής [] ικανοποιητική [] καλή
Your progress this year was: [] poor [] adequate [] satisfactory [] good

Σχόλια (διδασκαλία, διαχείριση της τάξης, κώδικας δεοντολογίας, προστασία των παιδιών, άλλες δραστηριότητες, παρατήρηση μαθημάτων, συνεχής εκπαίδευση)

Comments (teaching, classroom management, code of conduct, child protection, other activities, lesson observation, continuing training)

Parish coordinator or School SRE Coordinator (or both):

_____ Date: _____

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE

TEACHER OBSERVATION

Teacher's name : _____ Date: _____

School: _____ Class: _____ No of students: _____

Lesson: _____

✓ or ✕

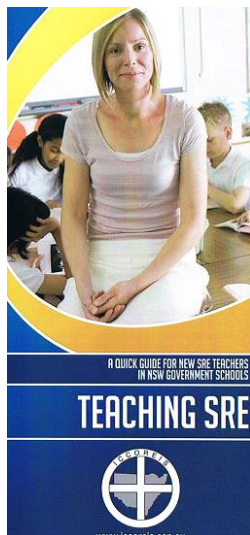
- [] Έχει υπογράψει το φύλλο συμμετοχής στο σχολείο / Signed in
- [] Έφτασε εγκαίρως / Arrived on time
- [] Ολοκληρώθηκε ο κατάλογος των μαθητών / Marked the class roll
- [] Ντυμένη κατάλληλα / Dressed appropriately
- [] Ξεκίνησε με προσευχή / Commenced with prayer
- [] Εισήγαγε το θέμα / Introduced the topic
- [] Αναπτύχθηκε το θέμα / Developed the topic
- [] Ενίσχυση της μάθησης / Reinforced the learning
- [] Συμπληρώθηκε με προσευχή / Concluded with prayer
- [] Διατηρούμενο ενδιαφέρον για το μάθημα / Maintained interest in the lesson
- [] Διαχειριζόταν τάξη / Managed the class
- [] Σέβεται τον μαθητή / Respected the learner
- [] Εξηγεί έννοιες / Explained concepts
- [] Συμμορφώθηκε με τον Κώδικα Συμπεριφοράς / Adhered to Code of Conduct
- [] Παιδική προστασία / Child protection
- [] Υγεία και ασφάλεια των εκπαιδευομένων / Health and safety of the learners
- [] Εκπρόσωπος για την Ελληνική Ορθόδοξη πίστη / Ambassador for Greek Orthodox faith

Optional

- [] Δίδαξε ύμνους / ψαλμωδία / Taught hymns
- [] Προστέθηκε κάποια δραστηριότητα / παιχνίδι / Added some activity or game
- [] Δραστηριότητα χειροτεχνίας / Provided a craft activity

Other Comments / Άλλα σχόλια

THE SCHOOL CATECHIST



Some of you are already familiar and experienced with these points but it is still useful to remind ourselves of the basic details.

- Christ is described as the Great Teacher (for example, Matthew 8:19, Matthew 5:2);
- As a school catechist you are part of the great tradition of disciples who went forth and taught others the Word of God as He did;
- You are helping the parish priest in the enormous task of contact with parishioners.
- Remember also that every teacher is gifted or talented in some way (1 Corinthians 12:28-29).

Take up this personal call to be a school catechist. There are many practical ways in which to make this happen. We have listed some aspects of what you can do to improve your ability to teach and to reach out to your pupils. Here is the perspective of one teacher with 16 years' experience:

For me, teaching Scripture is a labour of love and I thoroughly enjoy it. I know that as a School catechist I have a major responsibility and that I also need to lead by example. I need to always be on time and be well prepared to make sure the children understand and enjoy their Scripture classes. I prepare the lessons as soon as I can each week to make sure I have a good understanding of the lesson's message. I always pray that God's presence and guidance will be with my classes and me.

I always treat the children equally with love and respect.

I understand and acknowledge that the majority of the children have very little contact with their Church and Christianity in general. I also understand that many of them are from mixed marriages. In many cases I am the only contact they have with their Orthodox faith. Therefore, I have to be extra careful to show them the Christian way of life and to teach them forgiveness, love, understanding and other virtues. I try to do this with a smile and always with love.

Teachers should have the level of training, personal qualities and skills to teach in a manner appropriate to the needs of the age group of students they are authorised to teach.

Essential knowledge

Here are some topics about which we would assume that school catechists are familiar:

History of Christianity	The Divine Liturgy	Unconditional Love
Teachings Of Orthodoxy	Holy Eucharist	Compassion
The Nicene Creed	The Mystery of Confession	Prayer
Church calendar	Holy Communion	
Special feasts	Baptism and Christmation	
Biblical Themes	Icons	
	Church Etiquette	
	Fasting	

This year make a commitment learning more about the Orthodox Faith and growing as a teacher. If it is possible then attend our advanced and in-service courses.

Selection criteria

A parish might use the following criteria when selecting a person for teaching:

- Volunteers should have a strong personal faith, knowledge of that faith and behaviour consistent with that faith.
- Volunteers should have a demonstrated affinity with children, an understanding of their needs and capacities, and a commitment to them as people.
- Volunteers, ideally, should have some prior experience of teaching children in church-based children's programs.
- Volunteers should be willing to undergo training for accreditation as Special Religious Education teachers.

Support Your Parish

- Attend meetings and training sessions.
- Follow policies and curriculum of the Archdiocese and the parish.
- Check with the priest or scripture coordinator in your parish for help or advice as needed.
- Work closely with your school's principal and teachers
- Advise the priest or the coordinator if you are unable to attend. Remember to inform the school.
- Communicate informally with parents
- Invite the parish priest to meet the children and the school principal
- Encourage an Orthodox way of life: a sacramental and liturgical life, study of Scripture and Orthodox faith.

To close this section of your training, it is important to hear about the role of the catechist. The following edited comments are from Very Rev Fr Christodoulos (now His Grace Bishop Christodoulos) in his welcome to new teachers at our Basic Accreditation Course.

AN ADDRESS TO THE SCHOOL CATECHIST

We congratulate you, who have responded as volunteers to the call of the Church in order to help with the teaching of Orthodoxy in our public schools.

As members of the Church, the Body of Christ, we are all responsible to respond to the call of Jesus who said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt 28:19) and to become a "fisher of men" (Matt 4:19).

The ministry of the catechist in public schools is a very important one, especially in these times. I will dare to say that the majority of the children who have been baptised Orthodox are not taken to church regularly for the Divine Liturgy nor do they partake in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist which is the Sacrament which unites the members of the Church with Christ.

It is not possible for the priests to attend schools weekly, therefore your contribution ensures the presence of our Church in the public schools on a regular weekly basis. You will be the link between the Church and the children. And as I mentioned earlier, for the majority of the children, you will be the only contact they have with Orthodoxy.

The children may forget the stories that you will teach them but the example you show, will stay with them for the rest of their lives. People in general, but particularly children, are influenced by what they see rather than by what they hear. Our personal qualities affect people around us.

Therefore, a Scripture teacher must be the role model of Christian faith and virtue. In order to achieve that, a Scripture Teacher must be an active member of the Church. In other words, he or she must be a person who puts a lot of emphasis on his or her own spiritual journey in life. He or she has to be a person who is striving, with God's help, to develop virtues such as love, kindness, patience, faithfulness, gentleness, humility and self-control.

Always remember that the role of a Scripture Teacher is not to make moral, good people. To be a good person is just one part of it or if I may say, it is just a consequence of being a true Christian. The role of a Scripture Teacher is to help the children understand that the aim of life is to find God. To help them understand that Jesus Christ loves them and He is our Saviour. Help them understand that life in the Orthodox Church will lead them to Christ.

As a Scripture teacher, you will put in practice what the Church teaches us:

- Be an active member of the Church: Participate in the Church services and Sacraments and follow the *ascesis* of the Orthodox Church.
- Faith: Put your faith in God that you are not on your own but God is with you in this important mission.

- Prayer: Add your students to your prayer.
 - Love: Show love and kindness to your students. Consider that there could be personal/family issues which may cause them to misbehave.
 - Patience: Be positive and keep trying with the hope that God will help the children to benefit from your classes.
 - Happy: Be happy that God is giving you the opportunity to make a difference in the children's lives and show enthusiasm in preparing and delivering interesting lessons based on the curriculum.
 - Be understanding: Act professionally, be firm and fair but also listen to the children; try to understand their needs and be flexible when required.
 - Humility: Be humble enough to revise the situations you faced at school or the way you conducted the lesson in the previous class, and consider ways for improvement. Attend the seminars which are offered by the Archdiocese for Scripture teacher development.
- As a conclusion, and to summarise what I have talked about, I will finish by quoting two sayings by one of the Orthodox Saints, St Seraphim of Sarov: "The purpose of life is to acquire the Holy Spirit" and "Acquire the Holy Spirit and a thousand around you will be saved."

I wish you strength and wisdom from above. I trust that this will be a rewarding experience for all of you.



-oOo-

Questions

Now answer these four questions before proceeding further. Check your answers with your trainer or your coordinator.

1. What were the four basic details introduced in this section?
2. What are some key topics of essential knowledge for a School catechist?
3. What criteria should be used for the selection of teachers?
4. In what ways can a School catechist provide community education?

If you are undertaking this course by self-study then email your responses to sregreekorthodox@gmail.com



BASIC ACCREDITATION



The Rawlinson Report, *Religious Education in New South Wales Government Schools (1980)*, included the following statements:

“6.65 ...The authorising authority of each religious faith should therefore ensure that its teachers possess knowledge of the relevant doctrine and possess adequate levels of teaching competence.

6.66 Each religious group should aim to establish a reserve of appropriately trained teachers and support personnel.

6.80 At the denominational, state, regional or diocesan level, churches and other religious bodies have responsibility for:

(a) ensuring that adequate training opportunities and appropriate resources are available for their teachers;

(e) developing for the Special Religious Education representatives accreditation procedures suited to their particular religious tradition.

6.95 Teacher Preparation

The Committee is of the firm view that the churches and other religious groups must accept responsibility for ensuring that Special Religious Education teachers entering government schools are appropriately prepared.”

These statements formed the basis of recommendations which were accepted and endorsed by the then Minister for Education in February 1986.

Since that time, each of the Christian churches has developed programs to fulfil these requirements and set up minimum standards of training and accomplishment to qualify for basic accreditation.

Catechists, therefore, should be encouraged to avail themselves of relevant training opportunities, including in-service and tertiary courses.

Basic Accreditation

Basic accreditation helps you achieve a minimum standard. This course has been one part of your basic accreditation.

To achieve basic accreditation you need to:

1. Attend this workshop.
2. Complete the activities and answer the questions in this manual while you are in the class or through self-study.
3. Complete the yellow Training Record for Greek Orthodox Scripture Teaching and give it to your parish Scripture Coordinator or the parish priest.

TRAINING RECORD FOR GREEK ORTHODOX SCRIPTURE TEACHER		
IN-SERVICE COURSES		
DATE	COURSE/TRAINING	
OBSERVATION OR EVALUATION OF TEACHING		
DATE	PERSON EVALUATING	DETAILS

4. You should also have someone observe your teaching and ask them to sign the in-service record.
5. Complete a basic assignment (in Greek or English). The assignment is set out below. Once this is completed you submit the assignment and a copy of the training record above to St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College.

ASSIGNMENT TO OBTAIN THE BASIC ACCREDITATION

This assignment is necessary if you wish to obtain Basic Accreditation as a school catechist. The assignment is straightforward. It is actually based on the final assignment for the Diploma of Educational Studies for the College of Teachers London. Note that the purpose of the assignment is to help you think about and plan your continuing teaching. We do not need high level answers with references or a bibliography. It is better to write simply and clearly.

Your task

Part 1 Answer the following topics:

- comment on your background in scripture teaching
- provide a brief description of your teaching situation
- demonstrate your knowledge of the requirements for child protection
- describe how you will take responsibility for Special Religious Education in your school

Use these four points as headings. There is no word limit but as a guide write about 1-2 paragraphs for each point. You may write your response in Greek or English. Do not worry about spelling or grammar or written expression. Just write in a clear, easy-to-read fashion.

Part 2

Also attach a copy of your yellow training record which shows that at least one person has observed your teaching. If you are in a teaching situation where it is not possible or convenient to be observed then summarise one of your recent lessons and attach it to the assignment.

Where to send your assignment

Send your completed assignment to:

Registrar, St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College, 242 Cleveland Street, REDFERN 2016

Or email to:

regreekorthodox@gmail.com

Keep a copy of your assignment. Remember to include a mailing address for return of the assignment and your certificate. Do not forget to attach a copy of the yellow in-service card.

Due date

There is no due date for submitting this assignment but within the next 8 weeks of completing this workshop is recommended.

On completion of course requirements, a Basic Accreditation Certificate will be issued to you together with feedback on your assignment.

We have undertaken this program because in New South Wales, the Department of Education requests that each denomination is responsible for training its authorised Special Religious Education teachers but also because we want you to be well-trained and confident.

Diploma of Christian Studies

Current Scripture teachers under the auspices of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia who wish to undertake the Diploma of Christian Studies (by on-campus weekly classes or distance education) may be provided a scholarship by St Andrew's which pays for up to 50% of the tuition fee per 9 credit point unit *on the condition that they have enrolled in at least 18*

credit points in a semester unless their final semester of study normally involves only 9 credit points.

Such persons must submit a complete application for admission and provide a reference letter from their parish priest which clearly describes their teaching role and states the school(s) which they service in this capacity. All normal entry criteria for the Diploma of Christian Studies must also be satisfied. For more information go to:

<http://www.sagotc.edu.au/studies/courses/dipchst/>

-oOo-



Questions

Be clear about your answers to these four questions. A written answer is not required.

Check your answers with your trainer or your coordinator.

1. What must a teacher do to achieve the Basic Accreditation Certificate?
2. What assignment that must be completed to obtain the Basic Accreditation Certificate?
3. Is the assignment compulsory?
4. Is there a due date for the completion of the assignment?

Thank you for your support in attending the Basic Accreditation Course and for your dedication as a school catechist. We hope that this short program has been helpful to you.

If you are undertaking this course by self-study then email your responses to sregreekorthodox@gmail.com

