

16/86 Training of Full-time SRE Teachers

(This report has been printed, with minor editing, by request of the Standing Committee in response to Synod resolution 16/86.)

This report was received by the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney in October 1987.

Aim

1. To advise the Standing Committee as to the feasibility of training and appointing full-time suitably qualified teachers to assist with the implementation of the Special Religious Education ("SRE") programme in all secondary schools in the Diocese. The Synod resolution reads as follows -

"Synod, in the light of the endorsement by the NSW Minister for Education of the Special Religious Education recommendations 36 to 65 in the report 'Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools', requests Standing Committee to examine and report to the next Synod on the feasibility of training and appointment of full-time suitably qualified teachers to assist with the implementation of the Special Religious Education programme in all secondary schools in the Diocese."

Preamble

2. The Anglican Church in the Sydney Diocese has historically given priority to the regular teaching of Religious Education in schools.

3. The main reasons for the church's involvement in SRE are due to -

- (a) a sense of responsibility and obligation to parents, especially those in regular church fellowship;
- (b) a commitment to the ministry of the gospel and the teaching of God's Word where we have opportunity; and
- (c) a readiness to provide a general moral influence among the children and young people of our society.

4. Further to this, we would like to see the following occur as a result of SRE teaching -

- (a) children with a personal Christian commitment being encouraged;
- (b) students joining local congregational activities;
- (c) better church contact with parents of students; and
- (d) students perceiving the church to be a real and valid part of their community.

5. We are aware that the Government of NSW has given its firm support to the regular provision of SRE in schools as a response to parental wishes and has recommended that the churches also "give it their official support and commitment, and undertake it as a genuinely educational activity which is adequately staffed and competently taught" (Recommendation 45 of the Report Religious Education in NSW Government Schools).

6. Those involved in the teaching of SRE at State secondary schools often state that they do so in spite of lack of staff, resources or encouragement. In spite of this, SRE, in some form, is provided to over 80% of the 216 secondary schools in the Diocese and to 70% of all students.

Models for Developing Secondary SRE

7. The majority of parishes have teams of SRE teachers covering local infants/primary schools, but the bulk of teaching at secondary schools is performed by clergy and full-time workers.

8. In order to ease the burden on parish clergy and more effectively gain the objectives of teaching SRE, the following models have been adopted in various places.

Model One: Parish SRE Team

9. Small team of lay teachers to assist clergy in provision of regular weekly Secondary SRE.

Advantages: Students in contact with several members of local church who they may see outside of school in the community; they are not "professionals", not paid; students see real commitment of church; fulfils all recommendations of the Report.

Disadvantages: Few parishes have enough volunteers at present. Many SRE teachers lack confidence to teach secondary level, and would benefit from SRE teacher training.

Model Two: Restructured School SRE Programme

10. In the absence of sufficient local staff, the SRE programme in many schools has been altered so that the few available teachers can still carry out their task and have contact with a range of students. This could mean the presentation of joint-denominational SRE in small groups on a rotational basis.

Advantages: Local churches work together; small groups easier to teach. SRE teachers often need very little teacher training for "small group work".

Disadvantages: Lack of continuity with students; may miss seeing children of own denomination.

Model Three: Parish Youth Minister

11. Full-time paid and trained to work with youth, including the teaching of SRE at the local secondary school(s). Denominational.

Advantages: Specialising in youth work. Contact beyond church and school. Helps parish fulfil youth and family ministry.

Disadvantages: Limited to parishes with financial resource.

Model Four: Area Youth Co-ordinator

12. Employment of a person, full-time and trained to assist in youth ministry in an area, to help local churches co-ordinate drop-in centres, weekend and holiday activities and outreaches that can be offered to SRE students.

Advantages: Helps SRE staff link students with local church activities.

Disadvantages: Does not help develop SRE teaching, unless he offered training for SRE teachers. At least 12 Area Youth Co-ordinators would be needed to make this a major Secondary SRE, approach across the Diocese. Would cost at least \$145,000 per annum.

Model Five: Full-time SRE Teacher

13. Trained person, usually a trained teacher, to teach regular SRE in school. Joint-denominational. Supported and paid by a Christian Education Board formed by the local churches.

Advantages: SRE seen as more an integral part of school activities; teacher seen as part of school staff, understands adolescents well; consistent relationship; limited chaplaincy role.

Disadvantages: Local churches may opt out of involvement; this model may not help in linking students to church activities or enable them to view the church as having a real presence in their lives; the cost of covering every secondary School would be very high.

Model Six: Group of Full-Time Trained Teachers to Teach SRE in a Number of Schools

14. Such a "flying squad" contributes to the teaching of SRE in the high schools of a designated area, either alongside or in place of local church people. They may conduct some extra-curricular activities. They could also offer some teacher training opportunities.

Advantages: Provides regular and reliable boost to local resources; links teaching in a number of schools; able to support local churches in linking students to church activities and in providing training.

Disadvantages: Primarily the cost. Fifty such teachers could easily and immediately be absorbed by the Diocese for a minimum cost of \$1,250,000 p.a. The question of denominational as opposed to joint-denominational teaching must be raised as well: would other denominations provide financial support/extra teachers? Lacks intimate local involvement.

Model Seven: Para-Church Youth Team

15. A team of youth workers works in support of local churches by helping teach SRE, conducting drop-in centres and weekend/ holiday activities and organising or supporting youth outreach initiatives. Local churches help support the team. For example, the para-church group "Fusion".

Advantages: Trained workers provide SRE and link activities; possible resource for teaching materials and training; can concentrate on areas of social need.

Disadvantages: Local churches may opt out of SRE; local church/youth group may be disadvantaged if youth attend only outside drop-in centres, etc.; youth may still not see local church as the real basis for Christian fellowship; local church may not necessarily have a say in the policies of the group.

Model Eight: SRE Area Development Officer

16. A trained person is employed with responsibility in a given area for the development of SRE. This will include advice and consultancy, assistance in finding and training local staff, providing suitable resources and linking the school work with other parish activities. The person will also perform limited regular SRE teaching in the area. The area may consist of a geographical area, a deanery, or a region. At least six Secondary SRE Officers would be needed to cover the Diocese effectively. Cost \$210,000 p.a.

Advantages: Definite link with own denomination yet would be of value across denominational boundaries; would (over time) help develop local resources rather than provide substitutes; able to influence development of SRE over a larger area than other models.

Disadvantages: Longer term approach may not provide immediate relief; lack of intimate local involvement.

Model Nine: SRE Development Project Team

17. This model has not been used but is a possible variation of Model Eight. A group of trained persons would be centralised for the region or diocese and would, as well as providing general liaison, consultation and training assistance, be committed to specific development projects that might be of short or long duration. The main difference between this and Model Eight is that resources are centralised rather than "penny-packeted", allowing areas of greater need to be more thoroughly developed while still providing assistance elsewhere.

Assessment of Models

18. In assessing the most effective response to Synod resolution 16/86, we must balance the following considerations -

- (a) The resolution requests assistance with the *implementation*, not provision, of SRE. We are not wanting to replace local teachers, but assist, reinforce, and develop them.
- (b) The objectives presented in paragraphs 3 and 4 must be kept in mind when considering a model.
- (c) It is important that the local churches, and the clergy where possible, have some effective participation in the Religious Education programme or other school activities, if effective links are to be formed.
- (d) Anglican clergy indicate that more effective results Occur from SRE involvement where the SRE teacher is personally involved with link activities.
- (e) The best results will be gained by providing SRE for all school years. The older years are more likely to discuss issues and make faith decisions, but the younger (years 7 to 9) are important for laying foundations for younger decisions. If SRE stops at Years 8 or 9, it will be effectively viewed as being "only for the kids". Moral/spiritual development will often falter at that stage.
- (f) The cost of employing full-time trained personnel will probably be approximately \$35,000 per person per annum taking into account wages, travel, administrative back-up and resources.

19. Seven of the nine models presently operate within the Sydney Diocese and Anglican frame of reference. It is expected that they will continue to operate and even extend. Model Six exists within the Roman Catholic System (Brothers St Gerard Magellan), but the previous Sydney Diocesan involvement in this scheme proved to be too expensive.

Discussion

20. For the Diocese cost will be of primary concern. It is unlikely that funds will be available to employ substantial numbers of workers. It is also unlikely that an effective joint-denominationally funded approach would be successful. The possibility of a limited joint denominational approach should not be discounted.

21. The authority and responsibility for the provision of SRE remains with the churches on behalf of parents, not to outside bodies or individuals.

22. The full-time SRE teacher, in various models, is most effectively used when in concert with local, or parish, personnel. The professional SRE teacher is not necessarily more effective than the parish SRE teacher in allowing the local church to form links with students and families and fulfil its responsibilities in the local area.

23. In the absence of extensive human and financial resources, we believe it will be more effective to centralise limited resources with the capacity to assist in the implementation of Secondary SRE in both general and specific terms.

24. Following careful investigation and discussion both by the Board's existing SRE staff and the Parish Education Ministries Committee of the Board's Council it is our belief that there is a need to appoint a minimum of six Secondary SRE Officers. Their tasks would be those outlined in models eight and nine. One officer would probably best be located in each Region leaving a small team of two to move around the Diocese to work for limited periods in areas of special need. If these appointments could be made we believe that over a period of time (perhaps three or four years) there would be adequate support for parishes to provide SRE for all Anglican students in Secondary Schools in the Diocese.

25. It is also recognised that other models, such as area youth workers, full-time SRE teachers in schools and youth teams, should be supported on a local basis so they might assist the local parish church to fulfil its responsibility in Christian Education and parish ministry.

Appointment and Training of SRE Officers

26. The minimum requirements for any person appointed to these positions would be -
- (a) At least three years teacher training, i.e. a Dip.Teach. or B.Ed., preferably a bachelor's degree and diploma of education if working at the secondary school level.
 - (b) Some experience in teaching in primary or secondary schools.
 - (c) Some experience in Christian ministry outside the school context.
 - (d) Some theological competence would be required, for example, study for the Sydney Preliminary Theological Certificate or an equivalent qualification. Any person appointed as an SRE Officer would be encouraged to pursue their professional studies in theology and Christian education to at least the standard of Th.Dip. Or Th.L. (Australian College of Theology).

27. In addition all members of the Board's staff are required to participate in in-service training opportunities. These include an annual staff conference together with attendance as appropriate at conferences arranged by the Provincial Commission on Christian Education and the General Board of Religious Education.

28. At the present time there are no programmes available at a professional level for those who seek specialised ministries in Christian education. This is a major lack and is the reason for the current discussion between the Board of Education and Moore Theological College on the matter. The possibility of introducing a Diploma in Christian Education and/or a Master of Arts in Christian Education is being investigated. The introduction of such programmes would have significant resource implications for both organisations.

Recommendations

29. That the Anglican Diocese of Sydney should initially employ a further two Area Secondary SRE Officers at a cost of \$70,000 p.a. (see model 8) to work both on a local and regional basis to assist with the implementation of SRE in secondary schools. (The long term goal should be to have six Secondary SRE Officers working throughout the Diocese.)

30. That the funding of the two Area Secondary SRE Officers be provided for by the Synod through its Diocesan Income and Expenditure Ordinance.

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