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High School Special Religious Education (SRE) provides an important space in your child's schooling for exploring the Christian faith in a safe and educationally appropriate environment. The *Think Faith* Curriculum has been developed to provide a teaching and learning framework for nurturing, equipping and guiding your child's understanding of the Christian faith. *Think Faith* utilises contemporary educational theory that provides a platform for quality teaching and learning. It is a spiral curriculum that returns to, and builds upon, material the students have learned before. Topics are revisited over the course of the curriculum at increasingly complex and age-appropriate levels.

Think Faith is made up of four units for each school year. In the first term units, students learn about the Bible and how it provides the foundation for Christian living, and in second term, students study one of the four Gospels. In third term, students explore how a person with Christian faith lives, and finally, in fourth term, students explore the difference between Christianity and other world views. Each unit includes teaching and learning resources that

teachers are able to modify to best suit your child's learning needs. These units are developed around key questions that foster inquiry and personal meaning-making; and help students to develop an understanding of key terms, practise relevant skills and consider how they can apply their learning beyond the classroom.

SRE lessons provide an excellent opportunity for students to explore issues that are relevant to them in a non-threatening and supportive environment. Well taught SRE can provide students with a safe space to identify and evaluate both what they believe, and the grounds and implications of these beliefs, thus developing their ability to think for themselves. Within each lesson, students participate in a range of interesting and engaging learning activities that help them to understand the content being taught. These learning activities are organised to help students connect new learning with their existing knowledge; provide direct instruction where appropriate; help students investigate the Bible; discuss what they are learning; and apply and reflect on their learning.

In keeping with the legislative requirements of SRE¹, *Think Faith* aims to do the following:

ENGAGE STUDENTS WITH THE BIBLE.

The Bible tells God's big story of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation of his kingdom. All of human history, all human relations, and all human endeavours are located within this story. Without the Bible's story, humanity would not know what God is like, what his purposes are or what it means to be truly human. The Bible answers the big world view questions of our origin, the meaning and purpose of life, where our moral compass lies, and our destiny.

Due to its centrality in the Christian faith, the Bible is the foundation of all SRE lessons. *Think Faith* teaches the major events, concepts and doctrines of the Bible. While lessons may use other material, the Bible informs the Christian world view and is the lens through which issues are considered in SRE lessons.

ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO THINK MORE DEEPLY ABOUT THE BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

SRE is taught from a position of faith. It does not provide an objective or outsider's view of religion, but is anchored in the presentation of a personal, experienced faith. Within this context, SRE teachers are careful to be sensitive

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1. Section 32 of the Education Act 1990 requires that 'in every government school, time is to be allowed for the religious education of children of any religious persuasion'. The procedures for special religious education in public schools consider recommendations 36-72 of the report, Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools (1980), which were adopted by the government of the day as the basis of an agreement with the churches about the implementation of special religious education (SRE Implementation Procedures, DEC). In particular, these recommendations state that SRE should provide opportunities for students to:
 1. Develop an ability to interpret religious data within the traditions of their particular faith.
 2. Gain an appreciation of specific religious interpretations of issues and problems in which committed people apply their faith to life.
 3. Translate their learning about their faith into active expression in a worshipping community.
 4. Encounter, in a peer group-learning context, religious teaching given from a position of faith and commitment by a person explicitly associated with the religious community.
 5. Be aware of the availability of personal and group counselling in the area of religious need, as occasion demands.

to the needs of their students by ensuring that their attitude and approach is non-coercive and accepting of the different beliefs of their students.

PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP SKILLS IN CHRISTIAN PRACTICES.

SRE is not a church service or youth group. It is a place where your child can safely explore what it means to have a Christian faith within an educational setting. Your child will be given opportunities to develop skills in reading and interpreting the Bible and applying their learning to decision-making outside the SRE classroom. They will be able to discuss the implications of Christian teaching and investigate what it means to live as a Christian.

SRE provides an opportunity for all SRE students to practise the important skills of reading, talking and writing about text. Modelling reading the Bible for understanding, guiding students as they practise these skills themselves, giving ample opportunity for discussion, and allowing time for students to write about what they are thinking, provides the students with practice in valuable literacy skills that can be used across other curriculum areas.

HELP STUDENTS CONNECT THEIR LEARNING WITH HOW CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO LIVE.

While it is important for students to understand both that the Bible is not a moralistic tale, and that they cannot earn God's love through their good works; it is important that they understand that Christians are called to live in a way that is pleasing to God. *Think Faith* helps students to consider how the Christian faith impacts the way someone relates to God, to others and to the world.

High School SRE is available to any student whose family has chosen to enrol them in SRE. It is a great place for exploring Christian faith and *Think Faith* provides an engaging, interesting, and appropriate curriculum for all SRE students.

If you would like more information, please contact the high school SRE teacher at your school.