



## **GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA**



# **Social Media Policy and Procedures Audio-visual Material in Schools Interactive Whiteboards**

**August 2018**

**GO4**



*The night has passed, day has come and light has shone upon the world; therefore ranks of Angels  
praise and glorify you, Christ our God*

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The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese recognises the value of audio-visual resources but is also cognisant of the dangers of indiscriminate use of such teaching aids. A balance is required in teaching so that the personal effectiveness of the spoken word is not diluted. Religious education is more an interaction than subject matter instruction.

Accordingly, there is a strict policy on the use of social media and audio-visual materials for special religious education. The purpose of this document is to outline that policy.

This policy should be read and interpreted in conjunction with the Department of Code of Conduct and legislation such as the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 <http://www.ipc.nsw.gov.au/ppip-act>

### **Social Media Policy and Procedures**

It is recognised that the use of social media is increasingly part of everyday activities. There are some positive aspects of these developments but there is concern about their relevance for religious education.

It is essential to maintain a Greek Orthodox ethos so that it remains as special religious education. At the present time it is not clear how much social media is beneficial over and above the interpersonal contact of student and teacher.

Any effects of social media are specific to content, topics, images, presentation and audience. Not all these factors can be controlled in a common program that is Statewide.

Moreover, from a practical perspective, it is not clear that social media can be integrated realistically within the brief time available for religious instruction.

In order to be approved for special religious education: (a) audio-visual material needs to be true to the dogma of the Orthodox faith; (b) it needs to complement verbal instruction; (c) from a statewide curriculum perspective it will need to be available at all schools; and (d) will need to link to specific lessons. It cannot be used willy-nilly or in an unplanned fashion.

**At present, the general policy is that no social media (including online material, videos, computer games or Powerpoint) will be used for Greek Orthodox religious instruction without the approval of the Advisory Committee. A list of approved resources and the lessons to which they are linked will be posted annually.**

## Audio-visual Materials in Schools

Audio-visual materials such as videos may be beneficial for some aspects of religious education but there is a practical concern that not all teachers or schools will have access.

Accordingly, if the curriculum is to be taught in a standard fashion across all schools in this State then we cannot have one school using videos and another not showing them.

In the future, any materials authorised for use in classes (in particular videos) should have the formal approval of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia to ensure that they are developmentally relevant, are appropriate in content, effective for instruction and available to all.

Additional conditions under which audio visual materials may be used are very strict and go well beyond the requirements of the Department of Education and other organisations.

- Any videos must not breach copyright provision and be permitted for public screening.
- Any videos selected must be classified as G (general viewing) in the Commonwealth Government's National Classification.
- It is the understanding of the Advisory Committee for Teaching Religion in State Schools that no breaches of copyright will eventuate. It is our understanding that the approved videos may be played for educational instruction by way of an exemption in copyright law provided the audience is limited to persons who are receiving the educational instruction or are otherwise directly connected with the place where the instruction is given.
- As a matter of courtesy and protocol, the school must be informed of any video presentation.
- As a matter of courtesy and with regard for the rights of parents/guardians, they are to be informed in advance of a presentation so that they have the opportunity to withdraw their child from the viewing.

## PowerPoint presentations

PowerPoint presentations can only be used if they have been approved by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia.

This requires a formal review of such material by the Advisory Committee for Teaching Religion in State Schools. It is not a matter to be approved at a parish level.

Any review will have regard for the suitability of the material in the educational context and the age and maturity of the intended audience.

Any review will be sensitive to cultural protocols that may be relevant to certain members of intended audiences when previewing materials. This is because students from diverse cultures and backgrounds may be present in a class.

## Interactive whiteboards

The use of interactive whiteboards is encouraged in special religious education and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese has provided training in the use of interactive whiteboards, smartboards etc.

The use of the interactive whiteboard in classrooms for special religious education is a privilege and not a right. It is included under this overall social media and audio-visual policy for the sake of convenience.

Permission to use the interactive whiteboard in schools is required, and it is recommended that a classroom teacher provides a tutorial prior to using the equipment.

The interactive whiteboard may be used **only** as a tool for note-taking, for displaying an image, for a classroom exercise or activities. It can expand that range of teaching and instruction available to the Scripture Teacher.

### Other written materials, handouts

**It is not permitted for teachers to distribute any materials without the approval and authority of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia.**

This policy appears as a matter of convenience under the heading of audio-visual policy.

It means that teachers cannot hand out any religious materials – this may appear too strict at face value since it is the aim of the teacher to help students but it is designed to ensure that there is uniformity and quality control in Greek Orthodox Scripture.

It is designed to avoid cases where inappropriate materials (prayers, booklets, handouts) might be circulated.

Again, it is repeated that in order to maintain quality control and some standardisation across all schools, the Social Media Policy of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese does not permit Scripture Teachers:

(a) to use social media online applications in special religious classes or instruction (this includes social networking sites, wikis, blogs, microblogs, video and audio sharing sites or message boards that allow people to easily publish, share and discuss content);

(b) to use computer games;

(c) to use PowerPoint unless it is standardised and made available to all teachers;

(d) use interactive whiteboards to access Internet resources or display videos; or

(e) distribute materials, handouts, religious leaflets, booklets, prayers without prior approval

### Summary

The history of religious education shows that effective religious instruction has been possible without the use of social media, computer games or videos.

Greek Orthodox special religious education must not be relegated to the level of entertainment.

To a large extent special religious education is a personal encounter and not merely a “lesson”. Its content and purpose are vastly different from other school subjects or instruction that benefits routinely with audio-visual experiences.

The failure to cultivate good teaching cannot be replaced by audio-visual experiences, which may have unintended consequences.

To avoid negative consequences, it is mandated that for the time being:

- No social media is to be used for Greek Orthodox special religious education in State Schools
- No computer games may be used for Greek Orthodox special religious education in State Schools.
- Powerpoints may be used only if they are approved by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
- No written or printed materials may be distributed without prior approval of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and its Advisory Committee for the Teaching of Religion in State Schools

Meanwhile, we are working towards a policy where approved materials can be made available to all parents. In this way, social media will complement the face-to-face instruction that is essential for special religious education.



### **Acknowledgement**

The cooperation and support of the All-Faiths Special Religious Education and the inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools in the preparation of this document is gratefully acknowledged.