

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS OF NSW

Metropolitanate of Australia and New Zealand of the Serbian Orthodox Church (Metropolitanate) is a provider of Special Religious Education (SRE) for government schools of New South Wales (NSW), registered with the Department of Education of NSW.

All SRE teachers of the Metropolitanate have Work With Children Check (WWCC) clearance; they all receive appropriate initial and ongoing training in both Orthodox Christian catechism as well as classroom management and child protection. The Metropolitanate organizes regular seminars for SRE teachers and other volunteers, in regards to the above-mentioned issues, at least twice a year.

All SRE teachers of the Metropolitanate are volunteers.

Outline of the Special Religious Education (SRE) curriculum of the Metropolitanate of Australia and New Zealand of the Serbian Orthodox Church for public schools in New South Wales

The **SRE curriculum** of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Australia is divided in two parts:

Orthodoxy ABC for Years K-6; and
Orthodox Catechism for Years 7-12.

Orthodoxy ABC is the elementary program of the curriculum for SRE provided by the Metropolitanate of Australia and New Zealand of the Serbian Orthodox Church, intended for students of New South Wales public schools in stages 1 to 3, including early stage 1. This program is envisioned as a fundamental preparation for the more in-depth study of the Eastern Orthodox Christianity covered in the *Orthodox Catechism* program that is taught in high schools.

❖ Orthodoxy ABC

Orthodoxy ABC comprises of three parts, each of which is divided in two streams. There is also an attached basic agenda for early stage 1. The first part is called *Orthodoxy A* and it covers the Old Testament; the second part, *Orthodoxy B*, covers the period from the birth of Jesus Christ to His Ascension; and the third part, *Orthodoxy C*, examines the development of the Church and its basic teachings from the Pentecost until modern days.

- Two streams of *Orthodoxy ABC*

Stream 1 is intended for stage 1 (Years 1 and 2) and stage 2 (Year 3); Stream 2 is intended for Stage 2 (Year 4) and Stage 3 (Years 5 and 6).

The two stream division essentially means that students in Years 1-3 will go through a more basic program, studying the same contents as Years 4-6, but with more emphasis on cognitive learning, becoming familiar with the topics, developing personal creativity skills, getting to know their teacher and their faith. In practical terms this means that the teacher will describe each lesson in a few comprehensible sentences, appropriate to the age of the students, and then concentrate on other aspects of the elementary introduction such as practicing the sign of the cross, practicing the Lord's Prayer, colouring Icons, singing and chanting, watching videos relevant to the lesson topics, etc.

The desired outcome of Stream 1 is primarily for students to learn to like their SRE classes and teachers, and through them to develop a bond with the Church. It is also intended for the students to: learn how to make the sign of the cross, recite the Lord's Prayer, appropriately address the clergy, familiarise themselves with some key words and concepts such as God, Christ, Liturgy, Church, Icon, Heaven, etc. and have fun while learning.

Stream 2 is intended for Years 4-6. In Stream 2 students will experience more structured learning about the topics that have been covered in Stream 1. They will learn about the Bible and how to use it. In practical terms this means that the teacher will explain the contents of each lesson in more detail, providing a historical and chronological description, as well as outlining the basic spiritual meanings and interpretations of the text in question. Contents of the lessons will still be mainly scriptural but presented in the context of the Church Tradition.

The desired outcome of Stream 2 is for students to learn where the Bible came from, how it is structured and how to use it in everyday life; as well as to learn about the history and significance of the Church and faith. Students should become aware of the rich history of their Church and develop an innate impression of its proleptic nature.

- Agenda for early stage 1 (Kindergarten)

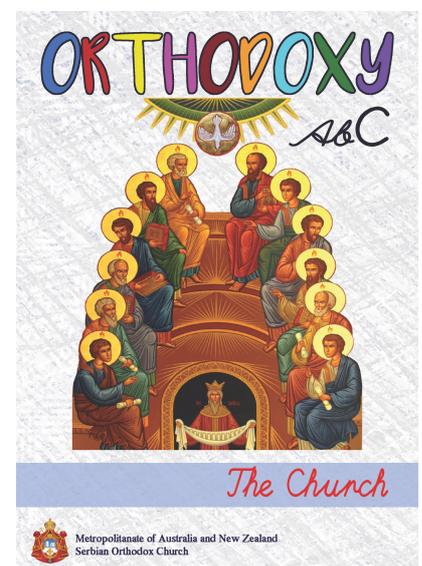
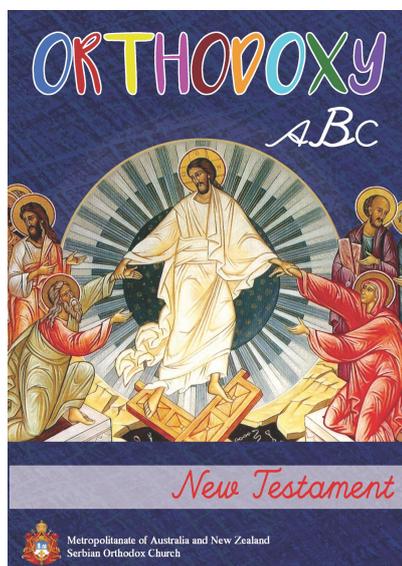
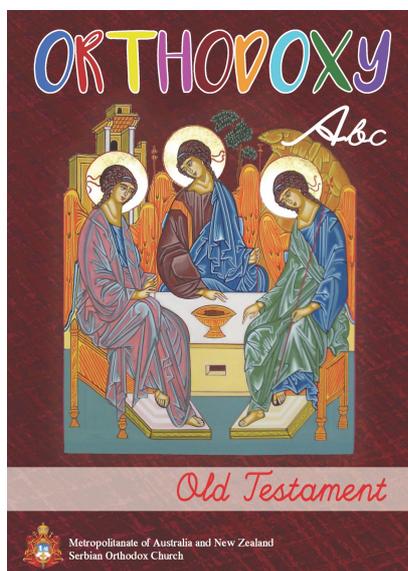
Early Stage 1 is chronologically connected to the *Orthodoxy ABC* program, but with greater emphasis on introducing the very basic elements of studying scripture (e.g. prayer before and after studying, making the sign of a cross, correctly addressing the clergy and scripture teachers, respect for God and the Church, etc.), rather than contents itself.

- Required resources

Essential literature for teachers of *Orthodoxy ABC*:

- a) The Orthodox Study Bible (K-6);
- b) Orthodoxy A (Years 1 and 4);
- c) Orthodoxy B (Years 2 and 5); and
- d) Orthodoxy C (Years 3 and 6).

Additionally students will need notebooks in which they will record their work, closely monitored by the teachers, as well as colouring pencils, writing pencils, paper, glue and other appropriate stationery supplies.



❖ **Orthodox Catechism**

The word *catechism* has been used for centuries by the Church to describe a summary of doctrinal teachings presented to the Catechumens in order to prepare them for reception into the Church through baptism and chrismation. In the SRE context we use the term *catechism* to stress that this is the path of enlightenment prescribed by the Church for those who are seeking to discover the endless vaults of spiritual treasures entrusted to the Church from above. This course will teach the students how the Orthodox Church understands itself and its mission in the world.

○ Structure

Orthodox Catechism	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Year 7	Sources of Christian Doctrine	Symbol of the Faith	The Bible	Church art
Year 8	The Church building	The Sacraments (Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, Confession)	The Sacraments (Unction, Marriage, Priesthood)	The Liturgy
Year 9	The Church Year (Feasts and seasons)	The Church Year (Feasts and seasons)	The Church Year (Feasts and seasons)	The Church Year (Feasts and seasons)
Year 10	History of the Church (I-IV century)	History of the Church (V-X century)	History of the Church (XI-XV century)	History of the Church (XVI-XXI century)
Year 11	Orthodox Spirituality	The Beatitudes	The Virtues	Prayer and Fasting
Year 12	The Kingdom of Heaven (life after death)	God is Love	Family as the Home Church	Saints, traditions, customs

○ Required resources

Essential literature for teachers of *Orthodox Catechism*:

- a) The Orthodox Faith (Volumes 1-4) by Fr. Thomas Hopko.

