

BUDDHIST COUNCIL SRE CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Our starting point is to recognise the importance of many factors which contribute to the wellbeing and happiness of children. These include the socio-economic situation, health and nutrition, the stability and support of family, and healthy friendships. But education is also important, particularly the skills and attitudes a child learns in order to manage his or her life right now. These skills and attitudes can be a foundation to prepare the child for adulthood.

Aim

The Buddhist SRE Syllabus aims to help children to lead happy and healthy lives and to instill **values and life skills** based on the understanding and practice of the teachings of the Buddha. This emphasis on **values and life skills** does not exclude learning facts about the Buddha's life or the key teachings, as these are also included in the Buddhist SRE Syllabus.

As the teaching of SRE can be challenging, some children may learn very little. So, if children are to retain anything from their SRE class it is more important to genuinely feel **Buddhist values** and be able to use these values in skillful ways in day-to-day life (hence **life skills**). In the long run, values and life skills will help to build self-confidence and purpose. Life skills in particular will help a child to be more resilient to the ups and downs of life.

Objectives

The objectives of the Buddhist SRE Syllabus are to

1. Instill **values and attitudes** which are consistent with the Buddha's teachings
2. Help children understand the Buddha's **teachings** and how to **practice** them
3. Enable children to learn **life skills** based on the Buddha's teachings

Buddhist SRE should be taught to give the student the confidence to be a practicing Buddhist, which may eventually mean Taking (or Going for) Refuge in the Triple Gem, or Three Jewels. Students should come to an understanding that being a Buddhist comes from the inside and is a personal choice. In other words, it can be more important to a young person to know what it is to be a Buddhist, than to learn about Buddhism.

Subject Matter

The subject matter of Buddhist SRE is organised into four strands. Individual lessons in Buddhist SRE can include one or more of these strands and will depend on the teacher's background and the knowledge level of students.

The four strands are

- **Being a Buddhist:** The understanding and practice of the Buddha's teachings from an individual perspective.
- **Buddhism in Society.** The context of Buddhism, how it has evolved, the forms it takes and how Buddhism and society interact.
- **Values and Attitudes.** The values which underpin the Buddha's teachings, exemplified by the virtues of the Buddha, such as compassion and generosity.
- **Life Skills:** effective ways to manage life such as managing negative emotions, developing good friendships, and speaking mindfully.

| Kindergarten to Year 2 (Stage 1) | | Learning outcomes |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Strand 1 Being a Buddhist | Impermanence/Change | Knowing everything changes, all conditioned phenomena are impermanent |
| | Respect for life | Understanding all sentient beings are by definition, feeling beings and have desire and a right to live |
| | Taking refuge | The meaning of the commitment to the Buddhist path by recognising, respecting and feeling gratitude towards the Three Jewels or Triple Gem |
| Strand 2 Buddhism in Society | Life of the Buddha | What are the significant moments in the Buddha's life and how do these events instruct us in the practice of his teachings? |
| | Values displayed by the Buddha's life | What are the values or virtues of the Buddha? How can we understand them and practice them? |
| | Vesak and other festivals | What is the significance of Vesak? What other festivals are there? |
| Strand 3 Values and Attitudes | Compassion | Karuna (Compassion) an open heart that cares for everyone, wishing others not to suffer. |
| | Loving-kindness | Metta (Loving-kindness). Wishing beings to be well and happy, care for others and yourself, unconditional, no strings attached, no expectation in return |
| | Not harming | Not hurting or killing another being, human or animal |
| | Truthfulness | Not communicating anything which is false, manipulative or self-serving |
| Strand 4 Life Skills | Courtesy | Behaving in a way which respects others |
| | Helping others | Respecting others. Seeing others as beings with an expectation and right to happiness and wellbeing. When and how to assist others |
| | Speaking mindfully | Speech which is pleasant, harmonious and truthful |

| Years 3, 4 (Stage 2) | | Learning outcomes |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Strand 1 Being a Buddhist | Being a Buddhist | Understanding what does it take for a non-Buddhist to become a Buddhist? Or what do people born into a Buddhist family grow up with? |
| | Devotion | Learning the aspects of respect, tradition, and confidence. Understanding devotion is based on one's experience and judgement |
| | Meditation | Learning meditation on the breath, e.g. below the nose or the rise and fall of the abdomen. Or Metta Meditation on unconditional loving kindness to oneself and others |
| | Mindfulness | Learning how to have non-judgemental awareness of the here and now (the present situation) |
| | Triple Gem/Three Jewels | Understanding what the Triple Gem, Three Jewels are: The Teacher (Buddha), the teaching (Dharma) and the community of noble ones who maintain the teaching through practice and teaching (Sangha) |
| Strand 2 Buddhism in Society | Families | How does a Buddhist family practice together? |
| | Helping others | How do Buddhists help others? What is socially engaged Buddhism? |
| | The Sangha | What does the word mean in different contexts? Who are the sangha? |
| | What is Buddhism? | What does Buddhism have in common with other religions? What is different about Buddhism? |
| Strand 3 Values and Attitudes | Generosity | Giving material objects, Dharma, or your time to others |
| | Gratitude | Being thankful towards others |
| | Honesty | Being truthful to others, being realistic and non-delusional with yourself |
| | Joy for others | Mudita, sympathetic joy; to be happy when you see others happy |
| | Respecting property | Not taking what is not given. Not destroying or altering something which is not yours |
| Strand 4 Life Skills | Responsibility | Being aware of our duties and what we should do in any given situation |
| | Accepting correction | Being able to hear constructive advice from others which, while indicating we have something to learn, will help us in the long run |
| | Kindness | Practicing kindness towards others in speech or action |
| | Managing friendships | Being a good friend and knowing what is and is not a good friend. |
| | Positive attitude | Having an open and constructive attitude in any situation, particularly unpleasant or difficult ones. Having a sense of humour. |



| Years 5,6 (Stage 3) | | Learning outcomes |
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| Strand 1 Being a Buddhist | Cause and Effect | Causality, the heart of the Buddha's teachings. Everything has causes and consequences, whether we know them or not. |
| | Free Inquiry. | The teaching of the Kalama Sutta, essentially following what works from your own subjective experience and which also is endorsed by wise people |
| | Healthy Mind | The importance of cultivating the mind as the forerunner of all things |
| | Middle Path | Avoiding the extremes of indulgence and asceticism, but can be applied to any choice between extremes |
| | Personal practice of a Buddhist | What does a Buddhist do to practice Buddhism? This varies across traditions and Buddhist cultures, but some practices are common e.g. taking refuge |
| | Precepts and morality | The five precepts, or the ten good deeds (3 of action, 4 of speech, 3 of mind). Not harming oneself and others is the basis of Buddhist morality and precepts. |
| Strand 2 Buddhism in Society | Three poisons | Ignorance (not understanding), Greed (craving), and Anger (Hatred). |
| | Art, images and architecture | What art has Buddhism inspired? What are Buddha images and how are they significant? Does the architecture of temples vary between traditions? |
| | Ceremonies and rituals | What ceremonies or rituals are practiced in Buddhism? For example dedicating merits, taking refuge, full moon activities, bathing the Buddha. |
| | Holy Sites | What are the holy sites (e.g. Sarnath) and how are they significant to Buddhists? |
| | The Buddha's disciples | Who were the Buddha's disciples? How can we learn from them? |
| | The Environment and Nature | What do the Buddha's teachings say about humanity's treatment of the natural environment? |
| Strand 3 Values and Attitudes | Traditions and Cultures | The main traditions. What do they have in common? What differences are there? What forms does Buddhism take in different countries and in Australia? |
| | Forgiveness | Overcoming a grudge, letting go of what others have done to us. |
| | Humility | Not having a large ego. Knowing your limitations. Appreciating the qualities of others |
| | Patience and Tolerance | Taking time to allow things to eventually change. Not having negative emotions caused by situations that one does not like |
| Strand 4 Life Skills | Effort and Perseverance | Maintaining effort in a skilful way |
| | Admitting mistakes | Being realistic and honest about what we may have done wrong, whether to apologise to others or learn from our experience |
| | Emotional Resilience | Overcoming stressful situations, managing negative emotions |
| | Managing social media | Not allowing social media and modern technology to control us, or harm us |
| Strand 4 Life Skills | Non-retaliation | Using mindfulness to avoid anger and harming others |



| Years 7,8 (Stage 4) | | Learning outcomes |
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| Strand 1 Being a Buddhist | Eight mundane interests. Also called Eight worldly Dharmas | Learning about the Eight mundane interests: fame and shame, praise and blame, loss and gain, pleasure and pain |
| | Eightfold Path | The path introduced as the fourth Noble Truth (Right understanding/view, thought/thinking, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, concentration) |
| | Interdependence | Inter-connectedness. Thich Nhat Hanh introduced the word inter-being, to show that all phenomena are inter-related |
| | Karma | This Sanskrit word is literally “action” (kamma in Pali). Karma is the causal law which starts with intention (skilful or unskilful) |
| | Nibanna or Nirvana | The extinction of the cycle of rebirth (Samsara) |
| Strand 2 Buddhism in Society | Retreats | The practice of being in a place which helps one to meditate and cultivate the mind, a bit like re-charging the batteries, or renewal |
| | Social issues | How does Buddhism deal with social issues such as poverty and inequality? |
| Strand 3 Values and Attitudes | The spread of Buddhism | How did Buddhism spread over the past 2500 years? Did Buddhism change during that time? What are the significant events over the past 2500 years |
| | Courage | Having the determination to do the right thing despite the difficulties |
| Strand 4 Life Skills | Equanimity | Upekkha (Equanimity). A balanced state of mind. It is the middle way state of mind that is neither clinging nor pushing away |
| | Avoiding loneliness | Knowing the difference between loneliness and being alone |
| | Learning from situations | Having a positive approach to mistakes we make, so that we learn from experience |
| | Protecting our bodies and minds | Making life decisions which maintain our health and well-being, whether through nutrition, proper rest, exercise or avoiding physical dangers |
| | Self-reliance | Being able to decide what to do and to act on this decision skilfully |
| | Settling disputes | Being able to resolve differences or arguments |

| Years 9, 10 (Stage 5) | | Learning outcomes |
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| Strand 1 Being a Buddhist | Arahant and Bodhisattva | Contrasting the similarities and differences between Arahant path and Bodhisattva path |
| | Reading the sutras | Knowing that Buddhist teachings or scriptures were written down at some stage and can be studied and used by us to better understand what the Buddha taught |
| | Rebirth and samsara | Understanding that Buddhism teaches cycles throughout nature and the cosmos. Samsara is the cycle of rebirth driven by unfinished karma |
| | Three Characteristics | Impermanence, non-self (not a separate unchanging entity), unsatisfactoriness |
| Strand 2 Buddhism in Society | Being a good citizen | What does Buddhism teach about being a good citizen in society? |
| | Science | What do Buddhism and science agree upon? Where do they differ? |
| Strand 3 Values and Attitudes | Causality in practice | Using an understanding of causality in practical and useful ways, e.g. shopping, working, studying |
| | Coping with grief | Knowing that grief is part of living, but knowing how to work through grief |
| | Having life purpose | Being able to develop a direction in life, being able to make life decisions which are skilful, in accord with Dharma |
| Strand 4 Life Skills | Right livelihood | Making skilful career choices and knowing how to work productively |
| | Skilfulness and Wisdom | Being mindful and compassionate |

