August 24, 2011

Information About Ethics Classes in NSW Primary Schools

Dear P&C Members,

Following a decision by the NSW Government, all NSW primary schools may include a course in special education in ethics as an option for students whose parents have requested exemption from special religious education (SRE/scripture).

St James Ethics Centre is the initial approved provider of these classes. The Centre has established a separate organisation, Primary Ethics, which is responsible for all aspects of course delivery, including providing trained volunteers and resources.

We currently have curriculum available for Years 5 & 6 students, but will be rolling out classes across K-6 over the next few years as more curriculum and trained volunteer teachers become available. The course is designed to have a minimum number of around 8 students in any class. Unfortunately, schools with fewer than six students in a stage can't be accommodated at this early point in our evolution.

Volunteer Coordinators appointed by Primary Ethics recruit Ethics Teachers and then liaise with Principals to determine the demand for Ethics classes for those students whose parents have sought exemption from SRE. Parents and community members who would like to be trained as volunteer Ethics Teachers or Ethics Coordinators should contact Primary Ethics through our website www.primaryethics.com.au.

In the event that demand for ethics classes exceeds supply, those children who had already opted out of SRE will have priority access to this class over others who might want to join subsequently. However it has been our experience so far that the vast majority of children who join our classes come from non-scripture, as expected.

Principals may not refuse establishment of special education in ethics classes where there is a coordinator and at least one trained Ethics Teacher available and it is "reasonably practical".

Could you please inform your wider parent community that if anyone wants to volunteer to help start Ethics classes at your school, they should contact Primary Ethics through our website: www.primaryethics.com.au

Regards,

Teresa Russell

General Manager, Schools