Schools Ministry

Leader Guide



Scripture Union NSW
Missions · Camps · Schools

Table of Contents

02 **Who is Scripture Union NSW?**
Get to know us and the rich history of SUNSW lunchtime groups.

03 **Types of Schools Ministry Groups**
Find our more about the types of groups there are and how they work with DoE policies.

04 **Difference between SRE and our Groups**
Understand how SU NSW school ministry groups differ but complement formal SRE classes.

05 **Getting Started**
Understand the 5 steps in getting a group up and running

06 **Expectations and Responsibilities**
Find out more about our compliance standards and expectations required of SUNSW volunteers and our commitment to support you, the volunteeer!

08 **Frequently Asked Questions**
Check out our frequently asked questions and other tips and tricks.



Using this document

This guide is here to support you as a volunteer of Scripture Union NSW schools ministry groups.

Inside, you'll find everything you need to feel confident and prepared, from getting a group started to staying on top of compliance and DoE requirements.

We've covered the essentials—how to begin, what to expect along the way and what's needed for ongoing compliance. Whether you're new to this or looking to refresh your knowledge, we hope this guide makes it easier to create a safe and welcoming space for students. Thank you for the important work you're doing.

SU NSW Schools Team

Scripture Union
New South Wales

Who is Scripture Union NSW?

Get to know us!

Scripture Union NSW is a movement of volunteers founded in 1880 who are committed to supporting and empowering people of all ages to serve Jesus in a variety of ministries across NSW.

Aims

Working with churches, Scripture union NSW aims:

a) to make God's Good News known to children, young people and families and

b) to encourage people of all ages to meet God daily through Bible and prayer so that they may:

- come to a personal faith in our Lord Jesus Christ
- grow in Christian maturity and
- become both committed church members and servants of a world in need.

Read more about our Aims, Beliefs and Working Principals here

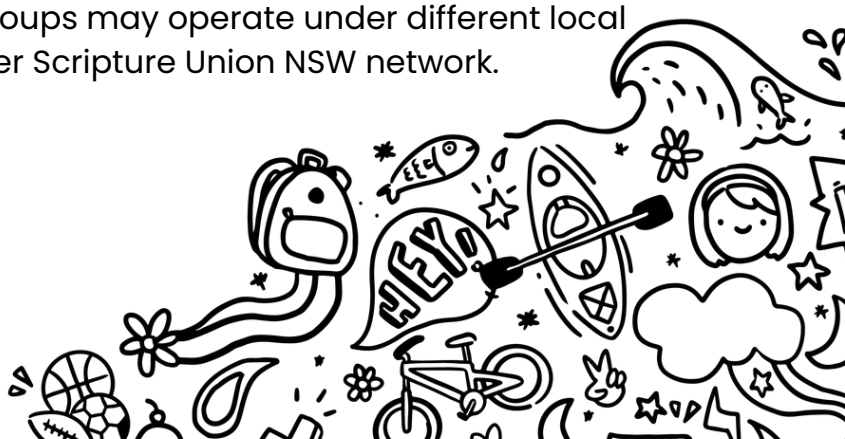
Our Mission

We long to make the good news of Jesus known in every postcode in NSW. As a movement, we are committed to providing young people with the opportunity to hear and discuss the Good News of the Bible through ongoing encouragement and support, equipping groups with resources, and empowering groups to run themselves as is suited to their context. We also provide opportunities for students and leaders alike to grow in their leadership skills through a variety of programs and resources.

History of SUNSW Lunchtime Groups

Since our first 'ISCF' (Inter-School Christian Fellowship) group in 1935, Scripture Union schools ministry groups have had a unique place in the landscape of NSW state schools. Since that first group, ministry groups have multiplied into many schools. Currently, there are more than 100 groups meeting each week, with an average of 1500 students meeting to have fun, pray, and read the Bible together. Although these school groups may operate under different local names, they are all part of the wider Scripture Union NSW network.







Types of Schools Ministry Groups

SU NSW has a rich history of having ISCF / Lunchtime groups in public schools right across NSW. Today some go by the historical name 'ISCF' where others are known by other names, some meet at lunchtime while others happen before or after school.
Regardless of how they look the purpose has remained unchanged: **To gather young people, share in relationships and discover more about God**.

ISCF / Lunch Time Groups

ISCF (Inter-School Christian Fellowship) and lunchtime groups are voluntary student organisations typically led by a registered facilitator. These groups aim to create a space for students to discuss faith, the Bible, and Christianity. Depending on the school's needs, the atmosphere can be either formal or relaxed.

SUPA

SUPA Clubs are lunchtime groups run in public primary schools. SUPA (Scripture Union Primary Aged) is often run like a kids' club, featuring games, activities, and discussions about the Bible and faith.

Other types of groups

There are several other types of groups designed to address students' practical needs while showcasing the love of God. Here are a few other examples:

- Breakfast Clubs
- Homework Helper Groups
- Mentoring Programs
- Event-Based Activities

We encourage leaders to thoughtfully consider the specific needs of their school environment and provide solutions that cater to the holistic needs present.



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New South Wales

What are VSA groups and how do they work with SRE?



All our groups at SU NSW are listed as VSAs with the DoE and come under the Voluntary School Activities Policy (VSA), which stipulates a list of requirements for principals and organisations/volunteers. ***Read more here***

These are different to SRE (Special Religious Education) classes. While its intention might be related, it is important to note the differences to understand how to resource and respond to students' needs.

We believe each ministry complements the other perfectly and we seek that both are present in schools. VSA groups and SRE together contribute to students' spiritual wellbeing which is one of the five pillars of public education.

Aspect	SRE Classes	SU NSW 'Lunchtime' Groups
Offical Classification	Part of official curriculum Special Religious Education (SRE).	Classified as Voluntary Student Activities of a religious nature (VSA).
Timing	During timetabled classes (typically 30 - 60 min per week).	During breaks, normally lunchtime or before or after school.
Oversight	Strictly regulated by NSW Department of Education (DoE) and a registered SRE provider.	These groups meet the requirements laid out through the DoE VSA policy. SU NSW ensures these standards are met.
Teacher Requirements	Must use accredited SRE teachers with appropriate training.	Can be run by volunteers with the appropriate compliance measures.
Student Eligibility	Students whos parents have opted them into SRE	Any student can attend with parent permission.
Attendence	Students attend as part of their regular timetabled school class schedule.	Voluntary attendance outside of regular timetabled class (eg lunch)

Getting Started

1) Register as an SUNSW Volunteer
Approval from SUNSW gives you access to free resources, credibility, DoE compliance, insurance and ongoing support.

To begin your approval process you first need to apply as a volunteer, visit ***Volunteer with SU NSW,*** login or create an account and select your school. If it is not listed, please contact us.

Register here

3) Principal Permission
Request permission from the school principal for a group to run. Share with them the Schools Info form, our permission notes and testimonials. Affirm that you will support all the school's regulations, safety measures & child-safe policies. SUNSW are happy to support you through this process providing letter templates, support and advice.

3) Prepare and Pray
Once you are approved and authorised as a volunteer and have permission from the principal it is time to get your team together. It's great to have 2- 3 people to keep continuity if you can. Please ensure they also apply to be registered with SUNSW.
Prayer is a vital, powerful foundation to Schools' ministry. Ask people to join in regularly praying for you, your group and the school community.

4) Plan and Promote
Spend some time organising logistics, including;

- When and where will the group meet?
- How will your group run?
- What resources will you use?

Check out our SU Schools page for ***Resources to Start a New Group*** such as our ***Top 10 Tips*** and ***Game Ideas Resource***.

5) Parent Permission and Attendance
Students must have parental permission to attend a lunchtime group and an attendance roll must be kept.



Expectations & Responsibilities



Of SUNSW

Bible Reading Resources
SUNSW is committed to providing high-quality, lunchtime group-specific resources to encourage and facilitate prayer and bible reading. All our resources are available to order via our website and are free for SUPA and ISCF volunteers. Browse online and only pay for postage when you order.

Compliance and Credibility
Lunchtime groups are categorised by the DoE as VSA's (Voluntary Student Activities) and do not fall under SRE. Consequently, students who have opted out of SRE can still attend lunchtime groups with parental permission. Furthermore, additional compliance measures are required to run lunchtime groups, including insurance, attendance, permission, child protection etc. Registering with SUNSW ensures that you meet these compliance measures. SUNSW volunteers have been present in schools since 1935. This history has resulted in a long standing relationship with the DoE and a well-regarded reputation in schools.

Encouragement, Empowerment, Equipping
When you register with SUNSW, you become part of the SUNSW family. Our schools' team is here to support and serve you providing pastoral care, prayer support, free resources, training opportunities, school-related events, advocacy, advice, and guidance throughout the year. We love to catch up with our volunteers throughout the year over the phone or for coffee at a café near you. You can also connect with fellow volunteers on FB or through our Schools events.

Of the Volunteer

Character
SUNSW Volunteers are expected to act in accordance with SUNSW's aims, beliefs, and working principles, while adhering to the guidelines set by the Department of Education and the school's policies. Volunteers should actively seek to grow in their faith and strengthen their relationship with God by regularly participating in church, reading the Bible, spending time in prayer, and finding ways to serve God and others in your everyday life.

Expectations & Responsibilities



Compliance

Volunteer Registration

Ensure you and any other leaders of your group are approved volunteers with SUNSW and maintain the requirements of being a registered SUNSW volunteer:

- Working With Children's Check (WWCC): a current WWCC number must be provided on applying as a volunteer and renewed 5 yearly.
- Safe ministry training: certificate of completion of one of our board-approved safe ministry courses must be provided and renewed every 3-4 years as per the course requirements. Please see our ***board approved SMT courses*** here.
- Provision of details of 2 referees (1 minister and 1 personal) is required as part of your volunteer application

- Permission: Ensuring students attending have parental permission forms completed.
- Records of Attendance: Maintenance of a weekly ***attendance roll*** - and submitting a copy to SUNSW at the end of each term.
- School Procedures: Ensure you adhere to any school procedures including signing in as a visitor at the office, and any other requirements they may have. VSA groups run at the principal's discretion.
- Emergency Procedures: Have an understanding of school emergency procedures e.g. fire evacuation and lockdown.
- Incident Reporting: reporting any accidents or incidents that occur during the lunchtime group directly to the school and to SUNSW.

Commitment

Our volunteers are committed to teaching the gospel faithfully to students in the lunchtime group while creating an inclusive space that respects and does not dismiss other beliefs and views.

We recommend seeking support from other volunteers, such as the SRE teacher, local church members, or a youth minister, to share responsibility and ensure the group's continuity during times of sickness or unavailability. We can help you do this!

Additionally, as part of succession planning, consider the leadership of the group for the following year, starting in Term 4. Planning ahead can help maintain continuity by involving other potential volunteers or equipping students to take on leadership roles.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I talk to the school principal about starting a lunchtime group?

SUNSW have resources which can help, including a template of a letter to send or give the principal, information flyers about lunchtime groups and testimonials from the community on the value of these groups. We are also happy to offer support in meeting with the principal alongside you if that is helpful.

Why should I register my lunchtime group with SUNSW?

Many of our volunteers are SRE teachers with existing affiliation to ministry bodies such as SUA or Youthworks or DoE teachers at the school. Registering with SUNSW might seem unnecessary, but we assure you it's not!

Just a few reasons why you should register with us:

- **Resources** – SUNSW has a range of high-quality, lunchtime group specific resources, available free for SUPA and ISCF volunteers. Browse online and only pay for postage when you order.
- **Support** – When you register with SU, you become part of the SU family. Our schools' team is here to support and serve you providing pastoral care, prayer support, free resources, training opportunities, school-related events, advocacy, advice, and guidance throughout the year. You can also connect with fellow volunteers on FB or through our Schools events
- **Compliance** – Lunchtime groups are categorised by the DoE as VSA's (Voluntary Student Activities) and do not fall under SRE. Consequently, students who have opted out of SRE can still attend lunchtime groups with parental permission. Furthermore, additional compliance measures are required to run lunchtime groups, including insurance, attendance, permission, child protection etc. Registering with SUNSW ensures that you meet these compliance measures.
- **Credibility** – SUNSW volunteers have been present in schools since 1935. This history has resulted in a long standing relationship with the DoE and a well-regarded reputation in schools.



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New South Wales

Frequently Asked Questions (cont.)

Why do I need to keep an attendance roll and why does SU NSW need a copy of it?

Collecting attendance rolls is required to adhere to child protection policies. Since volunteers are collecting an attendance roll for a Scripture Union NSW activity, the information is then retained for SUNSW records. It is important that SUNSW hold accurate records to reflect exactly which children and which leaders were in attendance on any given day.

How are lunchtime groups structured?

There are many different ways to run a lunchtime group depending on preference, school culture, size etc. Be creative and adapt to the school you are in and the students you are serving.
Common structures include:

- Game & bible discussion – the most common lunchtime group format, might look something like:
    1. Game/ice breaker
    2. Bible input
    3. Small group discussion
    4. Prayer

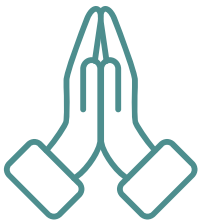
- Discussion groups – Using our 'Chat-a-box' resource in small groups. Students discuss the topic together and pray if comfortable.
- Bible Study – for smaller groups supporting Christian students. Go through a bible study book/you version and pray together
- Event Based – Hold an event once a term to show love to the school community eg. Sausage sizzle, art project, fundraiser.



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Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.
Amen.

Hebrews 13: 20-21





Schools

Scripture Union NSW

schools@sunsw.org.au

sunsw.org.au