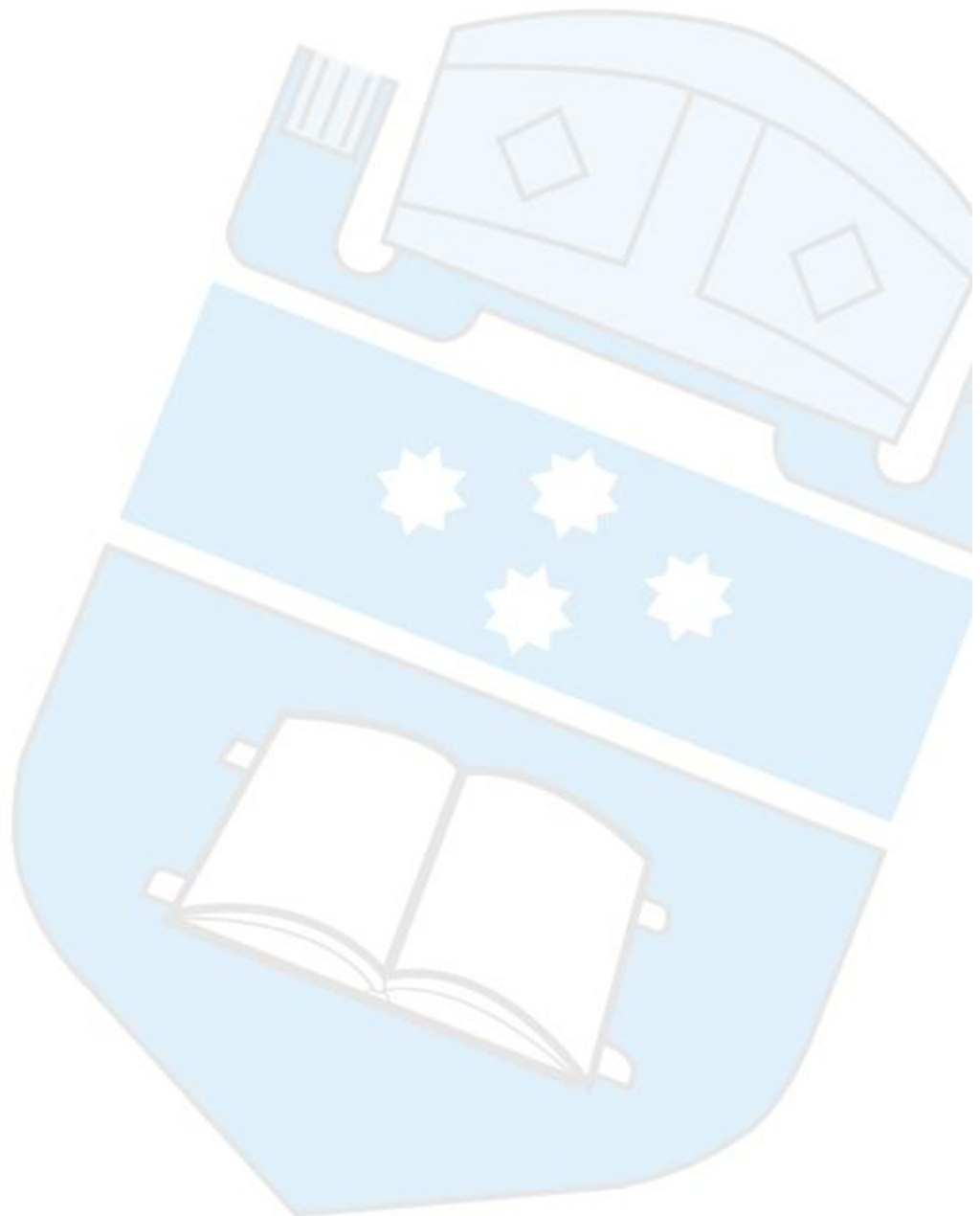


Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation

Philosophy of Education



Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation Philosophy of Education

The Vision of the Corporation is:

Serving Christ by equipping students for His world

Our Mission is:

To provide affordable quality Christian education

Our Objectives are:

To provide high quality education that is shaped by the Bible

*To communicate in word and deed the gospel of Jesus Christ
to students, staff, parents and the wider community*

To provide education that is financially accessible to local communities

To operate the Corporation efficiently

To grow the Corporation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We seek to achieve these through:

Promoting an imaginative and challenging worldview, shaped by the Bible, by;

- *honouring the Bible as the authoritative word of God*
- *using reason in supporting faith*
- *interacting respectfully with alternative world views*

Promoting value-added educational outcomes, by;

- *maintaining strong standards of teaching and learning*
- *promoting academic learning and research*

Understanding and pastoring students, by;

- *understanding that each student is created by God in His image*
- *valuing each individual student*
- *giving students opportunity to develop their Christian faith*
- *equipping and encouraging students to serve responsibly in the wider community*

Complementing parents and family, by;

- *honouring the family as the foundational unit of society*
- *maintaining an open enrolment policy*
- *supporting a partnership of school, parents/carers and students*

Transforming society through Bible-based values, by;

- *valuing humility, mercy and forgiveness*
- *valuing service to others*
- *connecting with the community of students, staff, parents and others in the local area*
- *adding value by serving the society in which we live*
- *communicating an understanding of freedom in a life of faith in Christ*

Respectfully proclaiming the Gospel, by;

- *providing opportunities for students, staff, parents and others in the local area to engage with the Christian Gospel*
- *as appropriate, applying Christian insights to teaching activities*

Constantly learning through expert leadership, by;

- *appointing Principals able to lead and integrate the intellectual and Christian life of the school community*
- *employing staff who can demonstrate leadership in both academic and Christian understanding, pastoral care and relationships*
- *maintaining good standards in academic, spiritual and management areas, the development of which is assisted through regular reviews*

The Philosophy of Education of the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation

Serving Christ by equipping students for His world

Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation Schools exist to provide an affordable education based on an Anglican reformed faith. Corporation schools hear the questions of the writer to the Corinthians as he asks: *Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age?* (1 Cor 1:20); and acknowledge the *foolishness of worldly wisdom* in contrast to the wisdom, knowledge and power of God revealed in the message of salvation through the cross of Jesus Christ. Therefore, this message of salvation in Jesus Christ – *the Wisdom of God* – underpins Corporation Schools as we understand and educate in the context of *Serving Christ by Equipping Students for His World*. The challenge before us is to *contextualise* the gospel of Jesus Christ in the culture of the society in which we live and learn.

Education involves the deliberate development of a learning situation in order to reach desired goals. Therefore as we seek to educate in the context of *Serving Christ by equipping students for His world* we will recognise God's sovereign purpose for creation: that through Jesus' death and resurrection, God reconciles the whole of creation to himself (Col 1:20). As the Diocesan Policy Statement on Education states, 'The great biblical goal of presenting people mature in Christ encompasses the whole of life in every facet'.

Corporation objectives involve:

- providing high quality education that is shaped by the Bible
- communicating in word and deed the gospel of Jesus Christ to students, staff, parents and the wider community
- providing education that is financially accessible to local communities
- to operate the Corporation efficiently
- to grow the Corporation

This document is a statement of the Corporation's intent and direction. Throughout this document the use of words such as 'will', 'must' and 'are' is in this context rather than one of guaranteeing particular actions or outcomes. The purpose of the document is to support the implementation of the Corporation's Strategic Plan 2020.

Based on the principles espoused by the Diocesan Statement on Education, these objectives are promoted in the Corporation's Strategic Plan and attained by a comprehensive educational program which is characterised by the following attributes.

1. Promoting an Imaginative and Challenging Worldview, shaped by the Bible

To be Anglican involves honouring the Bible as the inspired Word of God, authoritative for all human endeavour. Anglicans have also traditionally emphasised the appropriate use of reason in supporting faith, as our minds are transformed by the gospel (Romans 12:1). Thus, teaching and learning will be of a strong academic standard with the Biblical Studies program providing Biblical literacy and an understanding of the Christian faith. It is God's word which will provide students with a theologically sound, coherent framework of meaning, around which they can integrate their studies. In this framework every type of achievement is celebrated, including academic, cultural, physical, creative, social, spiritual and technical (SASC Strategic Plan) in acknowledgement that education that is Christian is necessarily holistic and culturally relevant.

Anglican schools recognise Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God, as the giver of meaning and the source of all truth. A Bible-based version of the liberal-democratic curriculum structure will offer the best vehicle for teaching and learning. The disciplines find their proper and meaningful function within a Christian framework which challenges the false, secularist claims of values-neutral knowledge. 'Can (Mathematics, English, Science etc) be said to represent Life, as it is known in the midst of living it? The best that can be said of it is, that it is a rapid table of contents which a deity might run over in his mind while he was thinking of creating the world, and has not yet determined how to put it together' (Whitehead, 1967). For the Christian, there is no dualism of sacred and secular; education is based on the unity of truth in God. This is 'the one principle that can give learning a frame of reference spacious enough to comprehend all knowledge and dynamic enough to develop moral and spiritual maturity in the midst of a materialistic and violent age' (Gaebelein, 1968).

Therefore:

- The Bible is used as the permeating influence on the teaching and learning of the school, not simply to proof-text sub-cultural mores, nor to evangelise in every lesson.
- Staff and students are encouraged to examine and articulate their own worldview.

- Staff and students are encouraged to interact respectfully with alternative worldviews, expecting to learn from the experiences of others different from themselves.
- Staff lead their students to recognise the beliefs at the heart of many knowledge claims and to evaluate the implications critically but respectfully.
- Students are encouraged to see the validity and joyful transforming power of the Christian faith.
- Innovative teaching and learning strategies are encouraged.
- Students are encouraged to develop a meaningful foundation for life from the story told by the school's whole offering.

The same rigorous application of Scripture is undertaken in every aspect of the school community so that students both Christian and non-Christian can see 'how faith shapes common life' (Williams, 2006). This includes every aspect of school functioning from administrative processes to marketing and to the development and appraisal of staff.

2. Promoting Value-added Educational Outcomes

Teaching and learning will be of such a standard that students will be encouraged to reach a level of attainment consistent with the gifts and abilities that God has given them. Staff will acknowledge the "uniqueness" of each child and will endeavour to extend each child in their learning experiences. A capacity to provide differentiated learning will be required to achieve the teaching and learning standards relevant to each child. Schooling will be an exciting and engaging environment for all children, irrespective of ability.

Teachers will also recognise the need for "lifelong learning" and will be engaged in education and training to enable ongoing professional development. This will include opportunities to:

- engage with the latest educational research and direction.
- be biblically literate.
- maintain currency in content knowledge and pedagogical expertise.

3. Understanding and Pastoring Students

Loved by God, all people share in God's nature in relation to love and rationality, yet are responsible and accountable for their alienation from Him. Pastoral care in an Anglican school is based on the principles of justice, mercy, repentance and reconciliation with God and other people. It is seen as integral to Anglican education.

Both effective pastoral care and pedagogy for learning are based on a Biblical understanding of students as:

- *Created by God in His image*, called to image him to the world, and therefore worthy of respect and dignity. Therefore:
 - the school regularly reminds staff and students, through evangelistic activities, of their calling to image God.
 - God's qualities of justice, truth, mercy and love should govern all school activities so that staff and students learn by modelling and practice to reflect His image also.
 - students will be given opportunities to serve others, including the marginalised, the weak and the poor.
 - students with diverse abilities and from diverse cultures will be welcomed and integrated where possible into the life of the school
- *Religious beings*, possessing a drive towards spiritual understanding. Therefore:
 - subject programming must include a consideration of knowledge as contestable
 - pedagogy will incorporate an understanding of human spirituality
 - a framework for understanding the world which centres on Jesus Christ is promoted as the best basis for pastoral care for all students.
- *An indivisible entity, while being multidimensional*. Students cannot be reduced to any one dimension of their being. Therefore:
 - both students and staff will always be treated as whole people, with gifts and needs that are more than just academic
- *Inextricably related to the world*, with all its richness and fullness. Therefore:
 - teachers must have an intellectual mastery of their subjects, and demonstrate both discernment and enthusiasm to use their expertise in serving Jesus Christ and their students
 - students are encouraged to develop a love of learning and challenge
- *Gifted with responsible freedom* to shape and fashion the world. Therefore:
 - students are given opportunities to develop faith-based values and servant leadership
 - students are encouraged to use the Bible as their authority in life
 - students are encouraged to accept their responsibility to apply their learning as they live in God's world

- *Sexual beings, male or female*, two complementary kinds of humanity. Therefore:
 - schools are careful to include a consideration of and respect for gender difference in all relevant aspects of their activities, but especially in the classroom
- *Communal beings*, experiencing their individuality primarily in terms of their unique contribution to community. Therefore:
 - Anglican schools are communities of grace, where Western society's tendency to individualism is challenged.
 - schools develop pastoral care programs to connect students with the school community and forge healthy Christian identity.
- *Fallen and fallible human beings*, while living under the common grace of God, with a God-given conscience and capable of knowing truth about God's world. Therefore:
 - welfare policies and discipline procedures set clear boundaries, with appropriate consequences that are administered with love and grace, to promote good.
 - staff and students are to understand their accountability before God and to others for their actions toward one another
 - repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation determine the model when "things go wrong"

4. Complementing Parents and Family

Anglican schools honour the family as the foundational unit of our society. Parents are the nurturers of their children into a primary culture with its associated values. In choosing an Anglican school they acknowledge substantial agreement with the school's Christian ethos and entrust teachers with the care and formal schooling of their children. Parents and teachers recognise their mutual responsibility and partnership in students' education while respecting their different roles. In accord with the Corporation's Strategic Plan, schools maintain an open enrolment policy, with fee levels set at an affordable rate for approximately 75% of families in the community that each school serves. Therefore:

- Anglican schools seek to incorporate a consideration of the family unit in all aspects of school life and structures.
- the school regularly undertakes formal and informal opportunities to communicate about student progress and needs.
- Anglican schools welcome the involvement of parents in many school activities, especially those that celebrate an Anglican Christian faith basis.
- parents are invited to become lifelong learners themselves through occasional seminars on the Christian faith, Christian education, pastoral issues and parenting.

5. Transforming Society through Bible-based Values

Values are initially developed in the context of the nurturing relationships of the family. Values are of prime importance to an Anglican school as they demonstrate the faith stance of the valuer. They have been defined variously as: "*principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as reference points in decision making or the evaluation of belief or action*" or, "*values represent that which we hold ultimately to be most dear*" (Cooling, 1994). Values promoted by God's word are part of His pattern for mankind generally and are concerned with human welfare. They are applicable to all students and are summarised in Jesus' command to 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind' and 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Matthew 22:37,39). Anglican educator, Tom Wallace has stated, 'A sense of connectedness, or heightened relational consciousness, with self, with others, with the environment and with God will be enhanced if certain key values are affirmed and pursued with a degree of commitment'. (Wallace, 2000)

Biblically-based values are unique. In God's kingdom, the priorities of our culture are turned upside down as values such as humility, mercy, forgiveness and service to others are practised. An Anglican school is a community based on faith-infused values with the power to speak to our culture. In the words of Walter Brueggemann, the task of ministry is "to nurture, nourish and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us". This will be reflected across the whole life of the school including the school leadership. Therefore:

- key values for each school community are developed in the context of this philosophy.
- leaders in Anglican schools are servants of those they lead, and will be chosen for their godly wisdom and humility as well as professional competence.
- all staff in Anglican schools model kingdom values and a Bible-based lifestyle.
- schools demonstrating the values of service and care will build connections with the community.

6. Respectfully Proclaiming the Gospel

The recounting of the Biblical meta-narrative is fundamental to the existence of Anglican schools. The primary emphasis is on the gospel of Jesus Christ and students are challenged to consider the comprehensive and exciting nature of the call to follow Christ. Although multiple opportunities are made available to hear the gospel clearly proclaimed and to see it modeled, staff are careful to respect the right of students to respond freely at an appropriate developmental level. For example, adolescent students might progress through a period of 'bafflement' (Cooling, 1994) in the struggle to align their beliefs and values with that of the school and the world. The classroom teacher is integral to engaging students in a learning approach that evaluates all learning against a gospel framework. Also, as Biblical Studies is the cohering centre of the curriculum, Biblical Studies teachers need to be supported in conducting 'a conversation between theology and education' (Cooling, 2010).

In schools where a specific chaplaincy role is established, chaplains will be a significant theological support for the Principal, students and staff as the school seeks to integrate Christian perspectives across the curriculum.

The Principal, as spiritual leader of the school, provides leadership in the school to ensure that:

- Biblical Studies is promoted throughout the school community as the central subject of the curriculum, in which students are supported in developing a belief-based framework for making sense of life.
- teachers are equipped to integrate appropriately Christian thinking in their subject areas as an outworking of the cohering role of Biblical Studies.
- chapel is an expression of a worshipping community acknowledging the school's relationship with and dependence on God.
- students are challenged by imaginative and creative recountings of the message of the whole Bible.
- A connection is established and promoted between the school, the community and local parishes
- the Chaplain, where this specific role exists, is acknowledged as a resident theologian of an Anglican school, providing challenge and support for theological thinking about education
- the Chaplain, where this specific role exists, assists the Principal in the role of the school community's pastor, ministering to the community in times of joy, sorrow and general spiritual need.

7. Constantly Learning through Expert Leadership

Anglican schools are scholarly communities with students and staff committed to lifelong learning which honours God. The Principal of an Anglican school is a co-pastor of the community and the lynchpin of an integrated educational direction. The Principal must bring to the role a firm Evangelical faith (Diocesan Policy Statement on Education (2007), p.5) theological and educational expertise, a commitment to personal growth and an understanding of people and change management. The Principal's role is best supported by the foundation of a clearly articulated educational philosophy and a collegial, fellowship relationship with the Chair of Council.

The Principal is central to the fulfillment of the school's mission as the appointment of Christian staff and their subsequent performance is the Principal's responsibility. All staff in Anglican schools are expected to be servant leaders, modelling mutual accountability for the wellbeing of the community through service. Teachers model a well-integrated intellectual and spiritual life for students, their leadership role being to direct the learning process of students in their pursuit of truth. Teachers are at the frontline of Christian education and are therefore challenged to grow professionally and spiritually.. Professional development in an Anglican school targets:

- Biblical knowledge and theology, applied to the educational context
- a holistic understanding of the subjects they teach so they can recognise the underlying presuppositions and knowledge issues
- a holistic understanding of students based firmly on a Biblical anthropology
- Christian analysis of the school's cultural context, both local and national.
- schools will be reviewed every 5 years to both affirm good practice and encourage further development, noting especially the Corporation's philosophy and Strategic Plan.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Brueggemann, W. (2001) *The Prophetic Imagination*. Fortress Press, Minnesota.
- Cooling, T. (1994) *A Christian Vision for State Education: reflections on the theology of education*. SPCK, London.
- Cooling T. (2010) *Doing God in Education*, Theos, London
- Diocesan Policy Statement on Education (2007)
- Gaebelein, F.E. (1968) *The Pattern of God's Truth: the integration of faith and learning*. BMH Books, Winona Lake, Indiana.
- Sire, J. W. (2004) *Naming the Elephant: worldview as a concept*. Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, ILL.
- Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation Strategic Plan '20 by 20'.
- Whitehead, A.N. (1967) *The Aims of Education and Other Essays*. The Free Press, New York.
- Williams, R. (2006) *Church Schools: a National Vision*. Keynote address to the National Anglican Schools Conference, London.

