

Diocesan Policy Statement on Education

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Introduction

True human wisdom consists of the knowledge of God and of ourselves. These are bound together by a mutual tie so that the true knowledge of the one is not possible without true knowledge of the other. The starting point for such knowledge is with God, who is the God of all truth¹. He has been pleased in Christ to reconcile the world to himself and to testify to his saving purposes in his word, the Bible.

Christian education is the effort to make available to each generation – children, young people and adults – the knowledge of God and of ourselves as revealed in the Bible and expressed in the accumulated treasures of Christian life and thought. Through such Christian education by the gracious activity of the Holy Spirit personal growth is nurtured and the Christian Faith together with its cultural heritage is conserved, transmitted and renewed across generations.

The great biblical goal of presenting people mature in Christ² encompasses the whole of life in every facet. The Christian life is the life of discipleship lived under the lordship of Christ through the authority of God's word, which informs and moulds our thinking and directs our approach to God, others and the world that God has made. It encompasses the development of personal knowledge and understanding, skills, character and virtues.

A commitment to education has been a feature of the Christian church from the beginning. Many of the great educational institutions of the West owe their origins to the outworking of this commitment. Richard Johnson, the first Anglican chaplain to Australia (1788-1800), built the first church, established the first three schools and began educating both Indigenous Australians and European settlers. The Anglican Church in Sydney has continued to develop Johnson's vision for Christian education through to the present day.

Statement of commitment

The Anglican Church in the Diocese of Sydney has identified a Diocesan Mission –

To glorify God by proclaiming our saviour the Lord Jesus Christ in prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit, so that everyone will hear his call to repent, trust and serve Christ in love, and be established in the fellowship of his disciples while they await his return.

As part of this mission the Diocese has reaffirmed its commitment to encourage lifelong learning for all its members and to disseminate to each generation the knowledge of God and of ourselves. It is therefore eager to support Christian education within families, parishes, educational institutions and informal situations that cater for the spiritual, intellectual, social, moral, aesthetic and physical development of people through pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary education and adult learning in its various forms.

¹ Isaiah 45:18-25; Psalm 31:5, 96:13; John 1:14; 14:6

² Colossians 1:28

A Christian approach to education

A Christian approach to education is deeply informed by a biblical theology and worldview. Among other things this theology and worldview³ affirms –

- the eternal existence of the one true God in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit;
- the sovereignty of God and the goodness of his purposes in creation and redemption;
- the unique place of Jesus Christ as the Son who reveals the Father and who alone restores us to relationship with him;
- the holiness of the Spirit who is the Lord, the giver of life;
- the value of all men and women, created in the image of God, including the capacity for and responsibility in the exercise of human choice;
- the reality of universal human rebellion and its consequences in guilt, corruption, enslavement to sin, death and judgment;
- the centrality of the cross of Christ in God's plan to redeem men and women from sin and all its consequences;
- the importance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the inauguration of the new creation and the proclamation of Jesus' future role as judge;
- the powerful work of the Holy Spirit to unite us to Christ by faith, so that we are justified by grace alone and brought to and sustained in the new life in Christ;
- the certainty of Jesus' return to establish the new heavens and the new earth in everlasting righteousness;
- the reality for Christian believers, as they await Jesus' return, of a world where belief and unbelief, blessing and curse, glory and suffering, hope and frustration, all exist side by side; and
- the supreme authority of the Bible as the word of God written to direct our response to God's grace and mercy in every aspect of our lives.

A Christian approach to education creates learning situations where the true knowledge of God, of the world and of ourselves can be explored and embraced. These learning situations may be formal, such as in a school, Sunday school or training program, or informal, such as where friends reflect on life's problems and meaning.

Education has three components: the learner; the teacher; and what is taught and learnt. It takes place in a number of human dimensions: spiritual, intellectual, social, moral, aesthetic and physical.

Created by God, the universe has an objective reality and can be rationally known. Humans are endowed by God with the capacity to inquire into and explore created reality, the knowledge of which can be described and explained by language. It is through human language that God is pleased to reveal himself to us.

God also endows humans with the imagination to use knowledge creatively, to invent things, to devise ways of caring for the world, and to conceive of ways of promoting human wellbeing.

In this light, education that is fully Christian will promote teaching and learning that –

- glorifies God, the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit;
- affirms the intrinsic worth of all humans, as those who are created by God in his image, and encourages learners to acknowledge that all their gifts, talents and abilities are given by God and are to be used for his glory;
- recognises that God is the source of all knowledge and purpose and has created the world to be both enjoyed and explored;
- encourages study in an atmosphere of enquiry;
- recognises that all learning has moral and social dimensions;
- respects individual differences and diverse ways of learning;

³ This Christian worldview finds particular expression in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, one of the founding documents of the Church of England which remains an authoritative confessional statement for the Anglican Church of Australia.

- acknowledges a necessary openness to correction in the light of our human capacity for confusion and error;
- is committed to providing for those with special needs;
- is designed to explain and apply the gospel message that Jesus, through his incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension, is both Lord and Christ and invites a personal response of faith;
- promotes the study of the Bible as the written word of God, authoritative for all human endeavour, thought and practice;
- develops and equips people to live by faith in Jesus Christ;
- encourages people to serve one another in love, both in Christian community and in the wider world;
- applies biblical teaching to contemporary issues;
- encourages an understanding of God's work through the history and present life of the Christian church;
- fosters a global vision of Christian care and compassion (including an understanding of the plight of those living in extreme poverty) which spans curriculum subjects and moves from classroom instruction to practical action;
- provides freedom for all to explore the relevance of the Christian faith and other belief systems for themselves;
- encourages commitment to the search for and commitment to truth as essential for authentic learning and personal maturity; and
- cultivates, critiques and seeks the transformation of culture in accordance with godly wisdom.

These factors help differentiate a Christian approach to education from other religious and non-religious approaches.

Education in a democratic society

The educational task of the Diocese of Sydney and its members will be informed by Christian principles in order to meet the needs of people in our contemporary democratic Australian society. While the biblical principles that inform our Christian worldview are unchanging, the legislative environment and societal expectations in which we operate will vary.

We recognise and affirm the respective roles and responsibilities of the individual, the family, the Church, public and private educational institutions, the community and the State in the provision of education, through formal programs and informal relationships⁴. We also recognise the opportunities and responsibilities we have within an increasingly globalised human community and through the means of modern communication technology to share our educational resources with others, particularly the less advantaged⁵.

Biblical teaching points to the following balance of responsibilities between these educational agencies –

- ❑ Learning takes place throughout the whole of life and adults must assume the primary responsibility for their own personal education.
- ❑ The family (the parents and to some extent the siblings and grandparents) is the primary educational entity contributing to the formation of the child by providing instruction, love, support, example and a sense of belonging, whose coherence and meaning are focused on God as disclosed in the person and work of his Son, Jesus Christ. The family serves to nurture personal growth in the context of an awareness of plurality, equipping children to pursue truth and to appreciate the Christian heritage as well as others. This enables each person to develop a sense of identity, self-confidence, responsibility for their own value system, a critical openness in the face of the competing beliefs and values of the wider society, and a sense of personal responsibility for their choices and actions.
- ❑ The congregation of God's people, as it meets to hear God's word and to speak, sing and demonstrate their beliefs and values, supplements Christian education in a context of wider expressions of Christian community, beliefs and values.

⁴ Romans 13:1-6

⁵ Romans 12:13

- ❑ Schools and other educational institutions have a delegated responsibility in partnership with the family.
- ❑ The State is instituted by God for our good and as God's servant it exercises authority to restrain evil and to promote the good⁶. Christians must therefore pray for the State to govern wisely so that we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity⁷. The destiny of human society is to be transformed by the gospel and shaped in conformity with God's purpose. There is no single biblically-mandated form of government. As a consequence Christians differ in the role they are prepared to assign to the State. It can be argued on biblical grounds that the State has no right to interfere in the parental right to nurture their children in their own faith, whether in the family or in partnership with educational institutions. However in a democratic society the State does have a delegated role in the provision of education.

1. General principles regarding the provision of education

The Diocese of Sydney is committed to the following commonly accepted general principles. These are set out in such a way as to be most readily understood and adopted by those involved in governing, managing and delivering educational programs (rather than being focused upon recipient groups). Anglican organisations and those who deliver programs are encouraged to apply the philosophy and relevant principles when setting educational objectives and framing their employment, staff professional development and other education policies.

The principles set out in 1.1 to 1.9 apply to **all** Diocesan activities and organisations. The remaining principles are grouped according to their applicability to particular types of activities and organisations.

The Diocese of Sydney –

- 1.1. Supports the provision of quality education. Christians are exhorted to strive for excellence⁸. Since the goal of Christian education is maturity in Christ, the provision of quality education to assist people to reach their full God-given potential is fundamental.
- 1.2. Accepts the primacy of parental responsibility in the education of their children⁹. The Church and the State must therefore be seen to have supportive roles. This implies that the Church should support parents in their choice of alternatives for the education of their children, whether in government or non-government pre-schools, schools, or through home schooling or special tutoring.
- 1.3. Supports the provision of accessible education to meet the diversity of human needs at all stages of life. Since individuals differ, a diverse range of accessible educational opportunities (both institutional and non-institutional) best suited to the learning needs of each individual through every stage of life is necessary. Social as well as individual benefits accrue from alternative forms of education that cater for this human diversity¹⁰.
- 1.4. Affirms its commitment to appointing practising Christians to the boards of governance of Anglican educational organisations.
- 1.5. Expects the boards of governance of Anglican educational organisations to appoint as heads only practising Christians¹¹.
- 1.6. Expects that priority be given to the appointment of competent Christian staff in Anglican educational organisations. The Diocese of Sydney supports the retention of the current exemptions under Commonwealth and State anti-discrimination legislation in the selection of suitable employees, to develop enrolment policies that are consistent with the mission of the organisation, and to deliver faith-based programs and services.
- 1.7. Encourages ongoing professional development and care for all staff in Anglican educational organisations.

⁶ Romans 13

⁷ 1 Timothy 2:2

⁸ Philippians 4:8

⁹ Deuteronomy 4:19; 6:1-9; Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4

¹⁰ Genesis 1:26-28; Romans 12:4ff; 1 Corinthians 12:4ff

¹¹ 1 Peter 5, Hebrews 13:7-8

- 1.8. Promotes safe working and learning environments.
- 1.9. Accepts the principle of public funding for the private provision of educational services only insofar as it does not affect the integrity of the Christian character of the organisation and its ability to provide programs and services that are consistent with its charter.

2. Application to specific educational activities

2.1. In respect of early childhood education

The Diocese of Sydney –

- 2.1.1. Supports parents in their choice of care and nurture of their infant children. The care and nurture of children in the first five years is of paramount importance. It is during this time that children's concepts of God, themselves, others and the world are formed.
- 2.1.2. Affirms Christians who conduct early childhood programs in occasional or long day care centres and preschools and recommends the formation of networks of these for mutual support and encouragement.
- 2.1.3. Encourages Christians to consider serving in the field of early childhood care and education.
- 2.1.4. Encourages the development of resources to support the Christian education of children during their first five years in families, care centres and pre-schools.

2.2. In respect of public education

The Diocese of Sydney –

- 2.2.1. Reaffirms its traditional support for public education in schools, TAFE colleges and universities, recognising the significant role that public education has played in the development of civil democratic society in Australia.
- 2.2.2. Supports parents in their choice of public schooling for the education of their children.
- 2.2.3. Supports the retention of General Religious Education in terms of the definition of 'secular education' in the NSW Education Act 1990 and supports its continued implementation according to the Recommendations contained in the Report on Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools (1980).
- 2.2.4. Affirms the importance of education in the primary faith of the family through Special Religious Education in NSW primary and secondary schools (provided for in Section 32 of the NSW Education Act 1990) and undertakes to provide suitably graded lessons taught by suitably qualified and trained teachers for every Anglican student.
- 2.2.5. Affirms and supports the existence of voluntary Christian groups and Christian support services, including chaplaincy, for students in public education to nurture the faith of students and provide a supportive Christian forum for the exploration of issues that concern students.
- 2.2.6. Affirms its continued active involvement in the recruitment of Christians who are committed to quality teaching and learning to serve as teachers and administrators within all levels of public education.
- 2.2.7. Encourages Christian teachers to undertake professional development, further studies and work experience that will equip them to exercise Christian leadership in public education.
- 2.2.8. Encourages Christian parents and citizens to be active participants in all facets of public education in order to support and encourage it to develop in godly ways.

2.3. In respect of Anglican schooling

The Diocese of Sydney –

- 2.3.1. Supports government funding, whether direct or indirect, to non-government schools to empower all parents to choose the most suitable school for their child.

- 2.3.2. Commits itself to providing high quality Anglican schools where teaching and learning are valued within a safe and disciplined environment and where students receive exemplary care and nurture of the whole child, explicit biblical instruction and examples of faithful moral living.
- 2.3.3. Endorses the contribution already being made to education and the democratic society in Australia by its Diocesan schools and supports the establishment and maintenance of further Diocesan schools that have the opportunity and responsibility to make their contribution to education in a distinctively Christian context. Such schools should be able to preserve the fullest possible degree of independence in their operation, subject to the appropriate registration requirements and the level of accountability that is consistent with the receipt of government funding.
- 2.3.4. Commits itself to the active recruitment of Christians who are committed to quality teaching and learning to serve as teachers and administrators within Anglican schools.
- 2.3.5. Encourages Christian teachers to undertake professional development, further studies and work experience that will equip them to exercise Christian leadership in schools.
- 2.3.6. Commits itself to the training of teachers and co-ordinators of Christian Studies to an appropriate level of knowledge and competence.
- 2.3.7. Supports the appointment of appropriately trained chaplains to assist principals in the provision of spiritual leadership and to faithfully minister the Word to the school community.
- 2.3.8. Affirms and supports the provision of voluntary Christian groups and Christian support services for students in Anglican schools to nurture the faith of students and provide a supportive Christian forum for the exploration of issues that concern students.
- 2.3.9. Encourages the importance of Anglican schools fostering links between students and their families and local churches including, where applicable, the establishment of a new church at the school. Schools should avoid programming activities on Sundays that prevent their students attending the church to which they belong.
- 2.3.10. Encourages Anglican schools to collaborate in their use of resources for the good of other Anglican schools, both within and outside the Diocese.
- 2.3.11. Supports and encourages Anglican schools throughout the Diocese and beyond by facilitating the provision of teacher training and development initiatives through the Anglican Education Commission.

2.4. In respect of other schools and public agencies concerned with education

The Diocese of Sydney –

- 2.4.1. Supports Christian parents who choose to educate their children in other types of schools and encourages those schools to ensure that their organisation, codes of conduct, teaching and student support and welfare is consistent with the biblical principles endorsed by this statement.
- 2.4.2. Encourages and supports the work of Christians and Christian organisations in providing special education for those with profound physical and intellectual needs, for foreign language speakers and for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, including people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island descent.
- 2.4.3. Endorses the role of an independent NSW Board of Studies, setting curricula that meet the needs of schools from all sectors, conducting public examinations for awards, and registering non-government schools.
- 2.4.4. Acknowledges the role of an independent body, such as the NSW Institute of Teachers, to register teachers and set standards for their professional development and access to leadership responsibilities.

2.5. In respect of tertiary education

The Diocese of Sydney –

- 2.5.1. Respects the role of universities as places of free inquiry, supports endeavours that extend human knowledge of God, humanity and the world in which we live, and encourages Christians to contribute to the sum of human knowledge through teaching, research, learning and university administration.
- 2.5.2. Supports the work of theological education in the Diocese, where colleges or schools of learning promote growth in the knowledge of God for all Christians, and especially those colleges which prepare persons for ordination or employment for full-time ministry.
- 2.5.3. Encourages the establishment and maintenance of university residential colleges that support students in their learning and academic research, as well as their personal spiritual and moral development, and that facilitate gospel proclamation and model Christian living in community.
- 2.5.4. Recognises the importance of TAFE Institutes and their colleges in providing vocational and specialised training across many fields and supports and encourages Christian involvement in teaching and learning and in the management of these colleges and the like.
- 2.5.5. Supports the work of appropriately trained chaplains in universities and TAFE colleges and those who provide voluntary Christian associations on campuses.

2.6. In respect of the governance of Anglican educational organisations

The Diocese of Sydney –

- 2.6.1. Endorses the overriding aim of each Anglican school and university college to educate people in ways consistent with the teaching of the Bible and gospel of Jesus Christ, and to maintain and uphold the Christian faith in teaching and practice.
- 2.6.2. Requires that all members of pre-school, school or university college councils elected or appointed by a parish, a Regional Council, the Sydney Diocesan Secretariat, the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation, the Cathedral Chapter, the Standing Committee, the Synod or the Archbishop, prior to taking up office, sign a Statement of personal faith in the form set out in Appendix 3 of the Synod's Governance Policy for Diocesan Organisations.
- 2.6.3. Requires that any members of pre-school, school or university college councils elected or appointed by the council or other bodies associated with the particular organisation sign a Statement of personal faith in the form set out in Appendix 3 of the Synod's Governance Policy for Diocesan Organisations, or, if in conscience they cannot sign this statement and are elected or appointed before 1 July 2020, they sign a Statement of support for the organisation's Christian ethos in the form set out in Appendix 4 of the Synod's Governance Policy for Diocesan Organisations.
- 2.6.4. Requires that the chair of each council of each Anglican school or university college governed by an ordinance of Synod however appointed or elected, sign, prior to taking up office, a Statement of personal faith in the form set out in Appendix 3 of the Synod's Governance Policy for Diocesan Organisations.
- 2.6.5. Requires that the council of each Anglican school governed by an ordinance of the Synod, the board of each Anglican university college and the board of the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation observe the following protocol in selecting or appointing a person as head –
 - Prior to the beginning of the selection process, the chair of the council or board is to inform the Archbishop of the process and the Archbishop, or a Regional Bishop nominated by him, is to be invited to be a part of the interview process, and the Archbishop is to be informed of the names on the final list prior to any offer being made for the position of head.
- 2.6.6. Supports the provision of initial and ongoing training for council members of Anglican educational organisations in their responsibilities as council members.

2.7. In respect of churches

The Diocese of Sydney –

- 2.7.1. Endorses the provision of church-based educational programs for people of all ages, by catering for their preferred learning styles, in order to increase their understanding of the Scriptures, to deepen their personal devotion to Christ as Lord and Saviour, and to increase their capacity to live faithful and fulfilling Christian lives.
- 2.7.2. Affirms the importance of the recruitment, selection and training of people of mature faith and suitable gifts for the leadership of congregations and parishes.
- 2.7.3. Endorses and supports the provision of quality reformed Evangelical theological and pedagogical education as a preparation for Christian ministry and service.
- 2.7.4. Encourages the training and involvement of lay people in the ministries of the church to its community and as Christians in their daily work.
- 2.7.5. Endorses the value and necessity of ongoing professional development of clergy and lay workers who serve local churches and in special chaplaincy positions.
- 2.7.6. Encourages the clear presentation of the gospel through the preaching, teaching and pastoral ministries of its churches.
- 2.7.7. Encourages all Christian people to identify, develop and use the gifts given to them by God for the service of Christ and of others.
- 2.7.8. Affirms the need to foster a balance between family, church and work that expresses God's intentions for holistic living for people at all stages of life.

2.8. In respect of community support services and special chaplaincies

The Diocese of Sydney –

- 2.8.1. Affirms the benefits of strengthening communities through the provision of family educational and training programs that are based on enhancing and supporting relationship growth and development and affirms the benefits of allowing into educational institutions those associated government, or other community based, sanctioned programs and agencies who also work towards this goal, such as careers advisors, counsellors, welfare, life education, health and allied workers.
- 2.8.2. Affirms the importance of providing professional and theological training for staff who are delivering or supporting services to the community.
- 2.8.3. Supports the encouragement of community harmony through the provision of culturally sensitive and appropriate education and training programs.
- 2.8.4. Recognises the spiritual, moral, emotional and social benefits from having trained chaplains for schools, TAFE colleges, universities, hospitals, correctional services, Defence Forces and the police and emergency services and sport, recreation and other occupational groups.

2.9. In respect of camping, conferencing and outdoor education

The Diocese of Sydney –

- 2.9.1. Affirms the importance of providing learning experiences through camping, conferencing and outdoor education programs that develop the personal and social skills and Christian insight and reflection of the participants.
- 2.9.2. Endorses the provision of conference centres and programs by Anglican organisations for this purpose.

2.10. In respect of educational leadership, professional development, advocacy and research

The Diocese of Sydney –

- 2.10.1. Affirms the important role of the Anglican Education Commission and its staff in providing educational leadership within the Diocese and where appropriate beyond the Diocese.

- 2.10.2. Encourages the Anglican Education Commission to facilitate the provision of appropriate training and development and to provide consultancy and other services to Anglican organisations that will assist them to implement this Policy Statement.
- 2.10.3. Supports and encourages educational reviews and research within the Diocese, especially in areas which will advance the quality of learning, the interface between Christian faith and educational practice, and encourages the Anglican Education Commission to publish the findings of such research.
- 2.10.4. Affirms the importance of active advocacy by the Anglican Education Commission on educational issues within the community and encourages the leaders of Anglican educational organisations also to play an active role in shaping and implementing public policy.
- 2.10.5. Affirms its commitment to providing leadership and support for inter-church and inter-faith bodies involved in education within the Province including the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools, the Director-General's Advisory Committee on Religious Education and the Provincial Commission on Christian Education.

Notes

The Synod passed the Diocesan Policy Statement on Education as a policy of the Synod on 24 September 2007 and authorised the Standing Committee to amend the Policy Statement from time to time provided that any such amendments are reported to Synod.

The Policy Statement was amended by resolution of the Standing Committee on 18 February 2008, 6 December 2010, 20 February 2012 and 1 May 2017.

The Policy Statement was amended by Synod resolutions 2/12 and 15/12.

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