

Draft statement on Reformed Anglican Education

1. **In theology**, a Reformed Anglican Education adheres to the evangelical mission and doctrines of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney. The mission of Reformed Anglican Education is synonymous with all Christian mission, the great commission in Matthew 28:19-20. The proclamation of the gospel therefore remains of pre-eminent importance. A Reformed Anglican Education provides the opportunity to engage each generation in the gospel, enabling young people to make an informed choice at the time when they make the majority of their most significant decisions about their lives.
2. For those who through the gracious activity of the Holy Spirit respond in repentance to the gospel, a Reformed Anglican Education must help connect them to their local Anglican church and in partnership support the development of mature disciples of Christ. This is described in the Diocesan Policy Statement on Education: *“The great biblical goal of presenting people mature in Christ (Col 1:28) 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.”*
3. The provision of Reformed Anglican Education in a post-Christian society is also a means to positively impact the lives and culture of non-Christians in the local community. We are in effect “exiles scattered” (1 Peter 1:1) amongst a non-Christian culture. Reformed Anglican Education therefore has a role in our community to be the ‘salt’ and the ‘light’ (Matthew 5:13-16). With wisdom and discernment, Reformed Anglican Education leads and shares eagerly in endeavours to serve others and to do good in society (Galatians 6:9-10; Titus 2:7-8) so that others may see and glorify God (Matthew 5:16), which cannot be achieved in abstraction from the gospel.
4. **In practice**, Reformed Anglican Education should have the following distinctive elements –
 - (a) A holistic approach to providing excellent education that is Christ-centred, student-focused and biblically founded, promoting the gospel of Christ and its importance for everyone.
 - (i) Providing a holistic and excellent education is a good goal that all schools share. However, the terms holistic and excellent will be redefined for Reformed Anglican Education.
 - (ii) Excellence is redefined away from an elitist perspective, where only high achievement is celebrated and valued. Rather in Reformed Anglican Education every student’s learning is valuable. There is therefore a specific focus on excelling at teaching students from diverse backgrounds and cultures and meeting additional needs of students, ensuring that for each student their learning pathway is achievable, appropriately challenging, and meaningful.
 - (iii) Holistic is also redefined as more than just a balanced development of academics, wellbeing, creative arts, performing arts, sport, service and character. Re-shaping this instead to have the goal of developing students in a manner to present them as mature disciples of Christ.
 - (b) The delivery of education transformed by a Christian worldview.
 - (i) “Christian Education” is defined as “the presentation of the whole curriculum within a Christian worldview founded on the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ” by the *Anglican Schools Ministry Ordinance 2016*. Thus, teachers of Reformed Anglican Education take opportunities to present how the Christian worldview transforms their understanding. In this manner, students are provided with a cohesive education where the importance of biblical understanding is made clear in all areas so that God’s true and good design may be known and of benefit to all.
 - (ii) Increasingly sophisticated competing paradigms are pervasive and are being overtly and subliminally driven into the minds of people through every media possible. Christian

education therefore seeks to equip and guide students to see God's wisdom in His design for the world, that they may benefit from the blessing of following His design. Further, that through an understanding of the Gospel and the Bible, that they may find the courage to take hold of the gospel and live life through Christ. The emphasis is explicitly not indoctrination¹, which demands students accept and do not think; rather a central goal is enabling students' informed critical thinking by comparing Biblical perspectives and the Gospel message to other perspectives and messages. In this manner students learn that God's design is distinct from, and better than, other competing beliefs and worldviews.

- (c) The delivery of an academic Christian Studies course across all years.
 - (i) The Holy Spirit uses the word of God as the "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17) and it is only through His work that some may be saved. The teaching of the Bible is able to bring wisdom, salvation, maturity, sanctification and equip God's elect for their good work (2 Timothy, 3:15-17). Therefore, the teaching of the Bible is of central importance to the mission of Reformed Anglican Education.
 - (ii) The direct teaching of the Bible includes the entire Biblical text with a focus on its connection together as one big story. In Christian Studies, students will learn how to read the text and interpret the author's intended meaning based on context, determine applications and implications from the text, and understand the history, geography, genre, Biblical context, and connections to archaeological findings from the text. It is important to maintain the teaching of the Bible to a similar depth and quality of other academic studies so that students may not dismiss the study of the Bible, or the Christian faith, as lacking credibility, academic merit, or value.
- (d) Providing effective pastoral care for staff and students.
 - (i) Reformed Anglican Education is not a volume of knowledge dictated to pupils, indeed, "knowledge puffs up while love builds up" (1 Corinthians 8:1). It is instead an approach to education that responds to the inherent value of people (Lamentations 4:2) and the destructive impact of false teaching (2 Peter 2:1). While providing quality Christian and Biblical education is a necessary component to this, it is important not to make the mistake of the priest and Levite from the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). If we are to teach students the truth of their inherent value and dignity as co-image bearers, we must demonstrate this in how we love and care for them and their families (e.g., James 2:14-17).
- (e) Upholding the diaconal ministry of Anglican Schools through appropriate appointment and professional development of school governors, leaders, teachers and other employees.
 - (i) The work of Reformed Anglican Schools, founded by the Anglican Church, is a targeted mission to reach and educate a large population that may otherwise not be engaged in the Anglican Church. Teachers and leaders in these schools therefore have a responsibility to teach the Bible to this population and provide effective pastoral care for them. The Bible warns us of the greater responsibility of Biblical teachers and leaders (James 3:1, 1 Timothy 3) and the importance of being trained in the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:15). Therefore, it is reasonable to adopt these Biblical principles when appointing people to leadership and Christian teaching positions.
 - (ii) As not all staff in Anglican Schools come with sufficient knowledge of the Bible (or Christian faith), there is an urgent need for ongoing teaching of the Bible to staff as well as to students. It is therefore the responsibility of Synod to work in partnership with schools to support and equip staff with theological advice and training sufficient to carry out their roles and contribute to the school's ministry.
 - (iii) The Scriptures remain the ultimate source of authority for decisions that the school must make. Therefore, the Bible should be well understood by leadership staff, ensuring all

¹ Collier, J. (2013) Models of Christian education. *TEACH Journal of Christian Education*, 7(1), 4-7.

decisions and actions of the school are Biblically sound. There is also significant benefit for the schools as they are informed and supported by the combined and collaborative wisdom of the Church leadership, including the Synod.

- (f) Appointing Chaplains to minister to the school community in partnership with local churches.
 - (i) Reformed Anglican Schools commonly appoint suitably trained Chaplains to minister in the school community. The specific roles of the chaplain are guided by the needs of each school's community and their own set of strengths and abilities. Some common aspects of their roles include: the exhortation of the Gospel of Christ through chapels and devotions, ministry of Christian groups, nurturing individual's faith, pastoral care, teaching of Christian Studies, theological advice, recruitment into ministry and mission, school service programs, and theological development for staff.
 - (ii) The chaplain's role has a focus of seeking to encourage students, staff and families to active discipleship through membership in their local church, rather than to see the school or chapel as an alternative to church. See also the treatment of section (c) of the Synod resolution, below, on the role of Chaplains.
- (g) Working in partnership between Anglican and other organisations to develop, promote, research, and advocate for the advancement of Christian educational practices.
 - (i) Reformed Anglican Schools carry the name and reputation of Christ, not just of Anglicanism or a particular school. Therefore, there is a responsibility for all in governance and leadership to be faithful stewards of the resources God has given and utilise these for the furtherance of the ministry and mission of Christ in schools. This includes the collaborative development, research and sharing of educational practices, the promotion and advocacy of these and support for training in them.