



**AN ETHOS STATEMENT:
SCOPE AND BACKGROUND**

**FOR ANGLICAN SCHOOLS
IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEENSLAND**

Anglican
Church Southern Queensland

Tolerance Tradition
Social Responsibility
Worship
Christian Respect
Celebrate

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“What should characterise an ideal Anglican school? Many of its qualities of course will be shared with good schools everywhere, whether run by the state or by denominational churches. An ideal school would evidence a commitment to learning, to justice, to individual achievement and to wholeness. Anglican schools will naturally value these qualities. This document seeks to define the normative features of an ideal Anglican school. In defining this distinctive ethos, the starting point has been the nature of the mother church itself on the simple assumption that Anglican schools will be like the Anglican Church.”

ANGLICAN SCHOOLS:

Are firstly Christian Schools

In their day to day life Anglican schools should live out their faith in a creating and redeeming God. They should provide an environment in which young people have an opportunity to develop a personal relationship with God, through Jesus. They should enliven the Gospel message of forgiveness, reconciliation, mission and loving service to God and our neighbours. The experience of sharing in the life of this community is itself an important part of Christian education quite apart from the formal content learned in the classroom.

Celebrate the contribution of the Mother Church to the wider political, social, economic and artistic life of our culture

The Anglican Church of Australia has grown out of the Church of England. As such, it has a long tradition of working within the heart of western culture in the broadest and most comprehensive sense. Our schools will be at the centre and not at the fringe of our culture.

ANGLICAN SCHOOLS SHOULD BE CHARACTERISED BY:

Appreciation of diversity

The Anglican Church in its long history has come to value diversity as a positive good and a distinguishing feature of a civilised community. Anglican schools should enliven such appreciation of diversity and acceptance and the care ethic implicit in this respect for others.

High Respect for intellectual endeavour

The teaching / learning ethic will show itself in hard work, intellectual rigour and openness to ideas and debate.

Commitment to tradition and dignity within school worship

The Anglican tradition of renewing ancient forms and sacraments to meet modern needs will be evident in the way the school community worships.

Commitment to tradition and dignity within school life

Anglican schools will use the richness of symbol, story and ceremony to express their values and order their lives.

Sense of social responsibility

The service ethic and a commitment to social justice will be seen in the willingness of Anglican school communities to offer themselves to serve God and His people in the wider community as critical participants.

Scope and History of this document

In 1994, Archbishop Peter Hollingworth asked the Anglican Schools Commission of the Province of Queensland to prepare an *Ethos Statement* for schools in the Province. The Archbishop asked specifically for a statement which was brief, accessible and could inform the Commission and its members of the normative features of an Anglican school. The document was also intended to be of assistance to Heads, senior staff, members of School Councils and Chaplains in shaping the ethos of Anglican schools.

The question of Anglican Ethos continues to be an important and lively matter for a number of reasons:

- a. Anglican schools are recognised and affirmed as part of the mission of the Church and as such should bear witness to it in all they do. The life and values of the school should be significantly shaped by this mission and demonstrate it in an authentic manner while fulfilling its primary function as an educational institution.
- b. As the nature of the Anglican Church's role and position in society has changed it has become necessary for schools to be much more intentional about their Christian character. In a climate where it may be difficult to source good Anglican teachers and in which the majority of students have no external link with a church, the school takes on a greater role in being the church's connecting point with the wider community.
- c. Education continues to change rapidly with pressures from Government, technology and competition substantially shaping the life and nature of schools. It is important in the midst of these tensions for Anglican schools to have a grounding point for what it is that makes them distinctively Christian.

In May, 1996, the *Ethos Statement* in its draft form was considered at the Biennial Anglican Schools Conference. During the life of the Conference, the document was subjected to a wide and searching scrutiny from Heads, Chaplains, teachers, parents and school administrators.

Even given the care taken in reviewing the text and substance of the document, this final form will not be a definitive nor exhaustive statement of the ethos of an Anglican school. The Ethos Statement will, however, attempt to offer guidance and encouragement to schools, councils and others who are charged with the work of glorifying God in our schools.

It is possible to define a distinctive ethos for Anglican schools in the Province grounded in the normative features of the Anglican Church of Australia. A celebration of diversity, a respect for the wholeness of the individual and the richness of our culture are a strong basis for any school's philosophy and practice. These qualities offer a connection between past, present and future and a direction for positive change and planning. They are a comprehensive foundation on which established schools can develop and on which new schools can build.

Statements of Anglican Ethos

Anglican schools are firstly Christian schools

Before seeking to define the distinctive nature of Anglican schools, it is important to emphasise that Anglican schools are before anything else, Christian schools. Our ethos begins with a commitment to Christian values and beliefs from which our Anglican values derive.

At the heart of the Gospel is the message of God's transforming offer of forgiveness. Through Christ's birth, death and resurrection, we can all share in that forgiveness and live a new life "to His praise and glory." Christians of every denomination and background are heirs of the same promise which is fulfilled when we can affirm, as St Paul teaches us, that Jesus is Lord.

Christian schools acknowledge the Kingship of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit in a church composed of forgiven men and women. This sense of a transcending Kingship and authority beyond the walls of the school should give all Christian schools a sense of service and commitment. Our foundation is not just to meet a local need, but to glorify the Lord we serve.

As a community of forgiven men and women, Christian schools must approach our responsibilities with a humility that other schools will not experience. Heads, Chaplains, councils, parents and staff will need to live out this humility in the way they deal with conflict, the way they react to problems of staff and student welfare, and the way they use resources.

Ideally, Christian schools will show in their day-to-day community life the distinguishing love of Jesus Christ as our Saviour. They will be characterised by acceptance, forgiveness, social justice, humility, cheerfulness and service. It is obvious that in any discussion of the normative features of Anglican schools, the presumption is made that the school will possess these qualities before they move to define their ethos as an Anglican school more clearly.

Celebrate the contribution of the mother church to the wider political, social, economic and artistic life of our culture

Most statements about the objectives of education speak at some time about cultivating the whole person. This is often evidenced in a commitment to broad curriculum objectives and recognition of excellence in all areas of learning and study, sport and cultural activities. Moreover, many schools seek an integration of these components so that there is a wholeness about the school's direction.

Anglican schools are uniquely placed to respond to this commitment. The greatest minds of English culture [Newton, Dr. Johnson, Austen and TS Eliot, for example] were comfortable and committed Anglicans. Their faith was nurtured not as some discrete component of their lives, but as an implicit dimension of their intellect, their social conscience and their art. Writing from this position in defence of the unique Anglican perspective, Thomas Arnold described culture as "*The best that has been thought and said in the world*" and that, he believed, was the proper study of all educated people.

Anglican schools then will seek an integration of faith and curriculum and pedagogy that begins with the affirmation of wholeness. This conviction returns no easy solutions to questions about "*What will we teach?*" or "*How shall we teach it?*" But there are consequences we can trace. We may be certain, for example, that Anglican schools will not choose texts in English studies that are conforming and safe rather than intellectually stimulating and thoughtful. Anglican schools will be able to bring the most comprehensive and mature approach to music, art and science questions because the scaffolding that supports our work is the cultural strength on what has been best thought and written on any topic. In this way, Anglican schools will be better placed than most denominationally run schools to respond to the big issues of culture and society because our background is the most inclusive and comprehensive.

Appreciation of Diversity

From the earliest days of British settlement, the Church of England has played an important part in the economic, political and cultural life of Australia. The Anglican Church in Australia has always represented the widest cross section of thinking in the religious community and even though the church itself has varied on some matters from diocese to diocese, there has always been a general breadth of opinion and practice.

The Church has always accommodated Anglo-Catholics, Evangelicals and Broad Church elements. Today it finds a place for Pentecostal and fundamentalist elements as well. Even when the most contentious issues have arisen, some accommodation has been possible to allow the Church to continue and fellowship to be maintained between all the disparate elements of the Church. This comprehensive nature is a direct legacy of the Church's original place as a national church in England and its strong sense that it represents the views and interests of a wide range of people.

One could look to Anglican schools then to be a mirror of this acceptance of different viewpoints – qualities which are implicit in our multicultural society. Families from non-Anglican and even non-Christian backgrounds recognise this and take confidence in the school's comprehensive but ethical basis.

A high respect for intellectual endeavour

The Church of England has always had a strong intellectual foundation. As an established Church, the Anglican Church has always been at the heart of the intellectual, scientific and artistic culture of the United Kingdom. This commitment to the life of the mind was one of the distinguishing strengths of the Anglican scholars at the time of the Reformation. They were able to best their Roman Catholic critics in debate because of their scholarship. Later Anglican divines such as Lancelot Andrewes and Richard Hooker promoted the three cords of Scripture, Reason and Tradition as the defining features of Anglican thinking and our schools share in this unbroken tradition. Learning, critical thinking, and the hard work implicit in scholarship should be normative features of our schools.

Tradition and dignity within school life

Archbishop Laud in the seventeenth century sought to make the Anglican Church the embodiment of the psalmist's call to "*Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*" In the majestic beauty of the Tudor English of the *Book of Common Prayer* and the emphasis on dignity and restraint in worship, the Anglican Church in its protean forms has always placed great emphasis on maintaining the traditions of the past in worship, architecture and practice.

Anglican schools are heirs to that respect for tradition. Even newly founded schools where all the local traditions are to be established are heirs to symbols, forms and stories reaching back into the English and Australian past. Sometimes those connections are made in badges and banners of schools; sometimes it is seen in the names given to schools or houses within schools [Canterbury, Whitsunday, St Hilda's]; sometimes it is in a patronal festival such as All Saints'. Often it is the architecture and art of the school. It is always to be seen in the ceremony of special school occasions, such as Speech Night and Foundation Day.

Communities seem to need connections with the past as part of the richness of the present. Sometimes these connections are clear and unambiguous. Anglican schools founded by the Sisters of the Society of the Sacred Advent make those connections immediately with a long tradition of the religious life and the richness that that conveys. Sometimes in making these connections, parents and schools are tempted to settle on the most obvious features of the school such as the uniform and similar externals. While other connections are being developed over time, these external matters are very important as a peg for that connection with the past.

Another important connection is in storytelling. Some Heads have reported that they have great success in giving the school's place in the tradition of the wider Church by "telling the story" of the

school; of its foundation; of its patron saints; of its people. Although there have been no new designated saints since the time of the Reformation, the Anglican Church has a tradition of recognising great lives and sharing the witness of those men and women with the wider, living Church. Anglican schools are uniquely placed to use this tradition in teaching and worship.

Tradition and dignity within school worship

Even where schools do not have Chapels large enough to accommodate the whole school or a large proportion of it, Anglican schools look for dignity and order in their corporate worship. The *Book of Common Prayer* probably finds little use within our schools now, but *An Australian Prayer Book* and the 1995 *A Prayer Book for Australia* offer schools many opportunities for traditional, dignified and accessible worship within classrooms, in the open air and in school halls which serve many purposes.

Schools have found many ways to match the formality and dignity of Anglican traditional language and worship with a student centered approach to worship. Music can sometimes bridge this gap; newly founded schools have worked hard at developing a choral focus within worship as an important element in their general music programs. Other schools have used student art work on vestments and chapel fittings as a way of proclaiming ownership of traditional worship. Some schools have commissioned talented students to provide art work for religious use in the school.

A respect for traditional worship and order needs to be considered, however, beside the equally important tradition of renewal and reform. The modern Anglican Church was born in the Reformation in an attempt to make the Gospel more accessible to ordinary men and women. The translation of *The Bible* into English, the service of Holy Communion in the vernacular and the simplification of many rituals sought to make the Church more responsive and more open to contemporary life and ideas. Just as the Anglican Church can be said to revere and cherish tradition, there is an equally strong element of renewal and innovation as part of its fabric. Schools participate in this dual tradition by searching for ways in which to incorporate contemporary forms and culture into worship.

A sense of social responsibility and social justice

Some students of the political and cultural history of Australia have condemned what they see as a “born to rule” mentality among the Anglo Saxon elite who dominated Australian culture, society and politics in the past. In identifying this unattractive quality, however, such critics have failed to recognise its positive corollary: the sense of social obligation which privilege carries. Anglican schools in the past may have served an elite, but the message of the schools to that elite can be summarised in Jesus’s message to the Apostles in *Luke 12:47*: “Much is required from the person to whom much is given; much more is required from the person to whom much more is given.” Men and women emerged from the best Anglican schools in the past with a strong sense of their social obligations. In the professions, in the business world, and in Universities, these students expected to be leaders, but their share in the social contract was to serve as well as lead.

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