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## Christian Purpose

In establishing the distinctiveness of Anglican schools it is important to try and identify some of the features of Anglican schooling and especially those which flow from the nature of Anglicanism itself and the history of Anglican schooling. These may be referred to as the ASC's 'brand values'.

The first thing that must be said is that the Anglican Church has seen its provision of schools as a significant service to the community. During the early years of White Settlement in Australia it was the Church which provided schools. Before long, however, the task was too great and the state needed to be involved. The Anglican Church has continued to develop schools, although for more than a century that was a difficult task without government funding.

In more recent years, with the advent of government funding, there has been a renewed concern for the provision of schools which are more affordable than the independent Anglican schools so that they might be accessible to a wide range of families (especially those which are Anglican) in the community. It was this concern which led to the establishment of the Anglican Schools Commission by the Synod of the Diocese of Perth and the development of what are now fourteen schools.

So what is distinctive about Anglican schooling? It may be that some of these features are shared with other systems or schools but, taken together, they form an impressive 'package' which is very attractive to many concerned parents in the community.

### 1. Aiming for Excellence and the Development of the Whole Person

Anglican schools have a good track record in helping students reach out for the best of which they are capable. All Anglican schools in this state are highly regarded by their local communities and most have waiting lists. In Anglican schools the co-curricular program is highly significant because it provides students with a wider range of learning opportunities than might be the case in some other schools. Thus the possibility for a more rounded education is enhanced. Anglican schools take seriously the needs of the whole person, that is, their spiritual, physical, intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic and moral needs. Such a stance reflects a Christian view of the nature of people and the need to affirm the particular gifts and abilities of each person.

### 2. Providing a Thoughtful and Balanced Education

There is a strong emphasis in Anglicanism in taking a thoughtful and considered approach to controversial and contemporary issues. Anglican theology and liturgy value both 'word', with its rational emphasis, and 'sacrament', with its more intuitive and affective emphasis. There is a valuing of the 'heart' as well as the 'head'. This is reflected in Anglican schooling, with its concern to encourage students to think and reason as well as to participate in the creative arts and to deepen relationships with others and the natural environment.

### 3. Inclusive and Open - Valuing All Students

Anglicanism has a capacity to hold together a diversity of Christian belief and practice. This comes from its 'Catholic' roots as well as its 'Protestant' ones. The notion of 'unity in diversity' is very important for Anglicans who work hard at being inclusive, although at times that is difficult to achieve. It is the intention that ASC schools make available a caring Christian education to as wide a cross-section of the community as possible. All students are valued whatever their background, socio-economic status or their abilities might be.

#### **4. Positively Affirming All that is Wholesome in Human Life**

There is a strong thread in Anglicanism which celebrates 'humanness'. Anglicans hold firm to the doctrines of creation ('And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.' [Genesis 1:31a]) and the incarnation ('And the word became flesh and dwelt among us.' [John 1:14a]). Anglicans rejoice in all that is wholesome in human life and experience and seek to live in a celebrative way. We also affirm humankind's need for renewal and healing and rejoice in the knowledge that 'in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself.' [2 Corinthians 5:19]

#### **5. Maintaining Continuity with the Past but Thoughtfully Responsive to Education Innovation**

Anglicanism maintains continuity with the past in its liturgies, its adherence to the historic creeds, and its Episcopal and synodical form of policy while retaining a capacity to be responsive to its cultural and contemporary context. In its schools the Church preserves what is good from the past while being thoughtfully responsive to education innovation.

#### **6. Pastoral Care of all Students Especially Those with Special Needs**

Anglican schools have always maintained a strong emphasis on pastoral care. This is evidenced in part by the appointment of a Chaplain but, as importantly, by a commitment on the part of all staff to care for the whole person. Each school will have its own structures in place to ensure that pastoral care is given a high priority. It is not insignificant or by chance that the ASC aims to provide 'a caring Christian education' in its schools.

A strong thread running through Anglicanism is its concern for social justice and its ministry to the poor and disadvantaged in the community. This is evidenced in its social welfare work through Anglicare. Social justice issues are significant items on Synod's Agenda and are addressed through the Anglican Social Responsibilities Commission.

The concern for children with special needs is an important element in the ASC's mandate and all its schools have a commitment in this area.

#### **7. Providing Anglican Christian Studies and Promoting Anglican Christian Values**

In Anglican schools the spiritual and moral dimensions of education find a significant place in the curriculum, and substantial resources are directed to this end. Students are encouraged to explore Christian faith, and practice and to develop a value system for their own lives which gives expression to such faith and practice.

#### **8. Providing Stability and Reliability in Leadership and Teaching Staff**

Anglicanism, by its very structure, provides stability in leadership and a series of checks and balances in the decision-making processes which impact on its parishes and its agencies. No school or parish can operate in complete independence. There is a reasonable assurance to parents that a school's education policy and practice will not be overly influenced by any particular person or pressure group.