



# “Signs of God’s Presence”

Appraising the distinctive character of an Anglican school

## The school’s educational philosophy is fundamentally Christian

If we were to ask ourselves the question: “What is the soul of our school?” some pointers would be that life is considered a gift of God and therefore we should live it with generosity and gratitude. Every child is beloved and belongs and is a child of God. The pursuit of knowledge is seen as an exploration of God’s truth about God’s created world, and is embarked upon in that intellectual framework. We have an incarnational and sacramental understanding of life. We make Christ the centre of our life at school and at the same time we are welcoming and sensitive to the diversity of faith found in Anglican schools.

## There is regular worship

God is acknowledged daily as the Creator and source of our life and strength. As humans we have been created as spiritual beings with the desire to discover God’s meaning and purpose in our lives, and endless horizons beyond ourselves. There is a rhythm of worship in the life of the school that allows for times of thanksgiving, devotion, prayer and reflection. There are times of celebration and sorrow.

## The Christian faith is taught

This is essentially about teaching a Christian worldview so that children can explore this understanding of life and are free to identify with it. Without dogmatism, we seek to make known our understanding of ‘God’s world and God’s truth’ together with its relational and moral consequences. Children need to understand that they have an inherent spirituality; we need to be talking about the mystery of God and how to be hopeful, loving, trustworthy and patient, and how to pray. Children need to have their eyes opened to the will and work of God and the seeds need to be sown so that they will be able to put their hope and trust in God. This should happen in the classroom through lessons and in the chapel through services as well as through confirmation classes. The school community, parents and teachers must also be educated in the Christian world view of the school.

## The school’s daily life reflects the beauty, truth and goodness of God

Because an Anglican Church school operates out of God’s truth in God’s world, it will reflect the truth, beauty and goodness of God in the fabric of its life - and seek to grow in reflecting all of them. Therefore it will serve its community with a quality curriculum, disciplined teaching and learning, supportive and loving pastoral care, committed and hardworking teachers, children who are engaged and participating in the learning environment and sound governance structures. Self-assessment and quality assurance is part of an Anglican Church school. An Anglican Church school is a “good” school in every sense, and is able to reflect critically on its progress.

## There is a generosity of spirit

One of the hallmarks of an Anglican Church school is a spirit of kindness, compassion and respect for all people. This expresses itself in healthy relationships in the school and toward the wider community. Concern for the common good is shown through community service and support of charity, and in healthy relationships with those of other faiths. The school is a welcoming and safe place. The school quickly identifies and responds appropriately to any member of the school community who is in need and who needs healing and wholeness.

## The school’s Christian character is reflected in its governance and leadership

The difference between a broadly Christian school and a specifically Anglican one, is that the latter are connected formally to the Anglican Church through the provisions of the school’s constitution, whether founded by the Church or formally agreed to between school and Church. This may be expressed in a variety of ways.

There needs to be a commitment from the school board and the leadership of the school to ensuring that the school maintains its Christian character and its formal relationship with the Anglican Church, as is essential to the mission of the school. This would be reflected in vision and policy statements and in the branding of the school. The authority of the Church needs to be acknowledged through the Bishop and Chaplain.

Anglican school constitutions generally provide that the school reports to the Diocesan Synod and Council and the Church acknowledges the school as an Anglican Church school.

The authority of the Church is integrated into the governance of the school, and the school legitimately expects the support and guidance of the Church through the Diocese in which it stands. This would include but is not confined to the Bishop’s personal interest and presence, diocesan representation in the governance of the school, the ministry of a chaplain, and accountability through regular reporting to the diocese.

## There are Signs and Symbols

In the school there will be signs and symbols of the Christian faith which remind the community of their faith heritage and challenge them to continue to live by faith. An obvious example is a chapel which is used for worship or a simple cross on the wall of every teaching venue would be another. Appropriate posters pointing to our common faith and how to live can also be helpful. There are many ways to show the school’s commitment to the faith, one needs to be creative and intentional. It would be natural for the name or symbols of the Diocese or the Anglican Church of Southern Africa to be displayed in any diocesan school and on its letterhead.

## Conclusion

An Anglican Church school in all its varied activities and in all its relationships seeks to honour and acknowledge the presence of God and allow God’s Spirit of light, life and love to be present as the foundation on which the school exists.

These characteristics can be used as a benchmark for self-appraisal of your school as an Anglican Church school.

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