Illawarra Christian School
Dealing With Theological Differences

Biblical Bases

Psalm 19:13-14
“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; 13 Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless and innocent of great transgression. 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.”

Psalm 119:105
“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path....”

Philippians 3:12-16
“12 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

2 Timothy 3:16-17
“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

1 Preamble

Members of our Association and of the broader school community come from a wide range of denominations, theological backgrounds, church traditions and Christian experience. Our school seeks to provide a Bible based, Christ-centred education for all. Our beliefs and backgrounds, where applied to Illawarra Christian School, cover an area that is both smaller and more specialised than those of the denominations etc. which we represent. This is because our school by its nature does not need to enter into some of the more controversial matters of church dogma - e.g. baptism, issues of church government, worship styles etc.

Historically, our Association’s Educational Creed reflects the Reformed faith in matters of doctrine. (The Reformed faith is founded on the Bible and reflects the teaching of the Reformation, and particularly that of John Calvin. Its basic tenets are a recognition of the supremacy of Scripture, of the centrality of a sovereign, creator God, and a focus on Jesus Christ and the salvation offered in the cross, and the principles of Scripture alone, Faith alone, Grace alone, Christ alone, and every area of life being under the authority of Christ and to be directed to the glory of God alone.)

Our potential membership consists of those who can subscribe to the Educational Creed.
Matters of faith and practice which are not included in the Creed should not be treated or raised in a controversial or divisive manner in any area of school life. Such matters rightfully belong to the special task of the parents and the church.

In dealing with any of these matters we need to be careful to be truly loving to one another despite our differences and be very careful not to cause our brethren (and especially children) to stumble.

Some areas of doctrine need more definition than given in the Creed to help teachers prepare lessons and deal with controversy in class. The following guidelines are designed to set useful limits. Where a student persists, the teacher may refer the student back to parents or the pastor of the church concerned.

2 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the approach used to interpret the Bible.

See Educational Creed:
B. The Word of God
D. Sin and Education
G. The Special Task of Parents
H. The Special Task of the School

2.1 Systems

A teacher ought not to rely too much on packaged systems for interpreting the Bible, such as the Schofield Reference Bible.

2.2 Cultural

Care should be taken to ensure that the Bible is not interpreted in ways which are inconsistent with the approach taken to Scripture in the Educational Creed. The school should also take care to avoid treating in a controversial or divisive manner, matters which are not included in the Creed but rightfully belong to the special task of parents (Educational Creed, G. The Special Task of Parents).

2.3 Authority

God’s Word is authoritative, infallible (it cannot be proven wrong, it always stands the test of truth) and inerrant (it does not contain errors). Therefore God’s Word stands above any philosophy or science invented by man. If there is any apparent discrepancy between God's Word and science, then we must believe God's Word by faith.

3 Creation

See Educational Creed:
A. Our Common Faith
C. Man’s Life
E. Redemption in Christ
F. Man’s Task

3.1 Importance

The doctrine of creation is vital to the whole message of the Bible. It is not simply a way to measure orthodoxy; the Bible begins and ends with creation. The goal of God’s
redemptive purposes is a new creation. In between those acts of creation, our redemption, sanctification as individuals and in the fellowship of Christ’s church, our relationship to the world, are closely linked with God’s creative activity. The doctrine of providence takes its rise from the fact that God is creator. The existence of death and decay in creation finds its origin in the sin of our ancestor Adam and God’s cursing of creation. Hence, creation ought not be treated as a peripheral matter but central to our existence and the education task.

It is important to note that the Biblical account is more concerned with the who and why of creation than with precise scientific detail of how and when. This does not take away from the infallibility of the Bible nor the importance of understanding scientific knowledge in the light of Scripture.

3.2 Teaching Creation

Students in the early years should be taught creation from a Biblical framework without any argument from an evolutionary point of view. This is in keeping with their learning stages in general and this would reflect the general expectations of our Christian families.

At the secondary level, students must be made aware of the competing world views and therefore evolution and other competing world views will be presented as a theory alongside a thorough presentation of the Biblical view.

3.3 God’s Purpose

Creation from nothing, is by God’s Word and according to His good purpose.

3.4 History

Because nobody was there to witness creation, we must accept the creation narratives as history, by faith in what God has told us (Heb 11:3). Their status as history rests on the integrity of God Himself. However students must also be made aware of evidence which makes belief in God’s account reasonable.

3.5 Adam and Eve

Consistent with the above statement on history, Adam and Eve should be taught to be the unique and original parents of the whole human race. That they together, reflect the image of God yet have distinct roles to perform in God’s purposes.

3.6 Creation Days

While a straightforward reading of Genesis 1 (supported by Exodus 20:11 and 31:17) seems to indicate that the creation “days” are six 24-hour days, the topic is controversial and it is not wise to insist on a particular interpretation. Any teaching on the days of creation should do justice to the biblical text as a whole and maintain the infallibility of Scripture and the authority of Scripture above any man-made philosophy or science.

3.7 Evolution

The term “evolution” in this document means the atheistic theory of evolution and its philosophical outworkings. This should not be taught as being in harmony with the Biblical view of origins. The Bible affirms that God has created all things, including man and woman who together are the pinnacle of his creation. Our Educational Creed
(E. Redemption in Christ) states that there can be no synthesis between knowledge which arises from humanistic assumptions and that which comes by divine revelation.

4 Handling Denominational Differences

We welcome the blessings and freedom that God gives us through His Holy Spirit grounded in Christ’s saving work. It is however necessary to set out some limits to popular teaching and practice in the interests of love and harmonious relationships within the school community. It should be noted that ICS is not, in the true sense, a church congregation, and that interdenominational differences must be managed carefully.

It is important to remember that where Christians are gathered together, whether at church or school, things should be done decently and in order, with the aim of maintaining peace and being friendly towards the non-Christian (1 Cor 14:23, 32, 40).

See Educational Creed:
A. Our Common Faith, lines 1—7, 28, 45-48
E. Redemption in Christ, lines 4—8, 14—16

4.1 Baptism of the Spirit

Should not be taught as a second event following Christian regeneration but as synonymous with Christian conversion.

4.2 Tongues

Our school comprises believers from a number of denominations and also unbelievers, therefore speaking in tongues would be unhelpful in our context as it is not understood by others (1 Cor 14:2) and is a stumbling block to unbelievers (1 Cor 14:23).

4.3 Prophecy

Prophecy as further revelation of divine truth is not to be supported. However, we should encourage students to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as they think biblically about issues, to speak and apply the Word of God to the situations they encounter, and not to discount what others say but to examine everything in the light of God’s Word.

4.4 Healing

We cannot, nor would we wish to, limit God’s power to heal. However, some claims of healing are dubious and often unverifiable. It would therefore be unwise to be drawn into any debate about human agencies or ministries which claim miraculous healing. Teachers are advised to concentrate on prayer and faith in the God who heals.

4.5 Expressions of Worship at School

We welcome wholehearted expressions of worship, but not that which is disruptive to, nor in disharmony with, the tone set by the rest of the school community. Moreover, such expression ought not be used as a statement to make a point of difference between student and student.
5 **Second Coming of Christ**

Christians have many different views about the events surrounding the second coming of our Saviour. All agree that JESUS IS COMING AGAIN. The details of His next appearance are interesting and important to study, but differences in details should not obscure the central fact: He is coming! Teachers should note that the Bible emphasis on this fact is not to promote speculative interest, but rather commend holy living and vigilance.